

# Geneva gets the hang against these Bulldogs

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It was the Bulldogs again, and they were in red and white just like last week.

But this time the host Geneva Vikings prevailed by stopping Grant 42-14 to open the Class 6A playoffs with a bang and wipe out the memory of last weekend's regular-season finale setback against Batavia's Bulldogs.

Geneva (9-1) won for the ninth time without a loss in the first round of the state playoffs, while North Suburban Prairie foe Grant (5-5) was bounced out of postseason play in the opening round for the second straight season.

Halfback Chris Modjeski and quarterback Shaun Ratay did most of the damage. Modjeski ran for 2 touchdowns and threw for another, a 13-yard halfback option to Ratay, while Ratay threw three touchdown passes of his, while completing 12 of 15 passes for 206 yards.

The Geneva defense stifled Grant's rushing attack and also picked off 2 Bulldogs passes while dominating play on the line.

"We were really focused on stopping their run and we figured if they had to put the ball in the air, we would be OK," Geneva coach Rob Wicinski said.

The Vikings were more than OK in rolling to a 35-0 halftime lead and a 42-0 lead early in the second half that resulted in the running clock rule taking hold.

Grant coach Kurt Rous, a veteran of the Grant football program but finishing his first year as head coach, knew his team had run into a buzzsaw.

"I thought we were going to play better than what we did," Rous said. "Geneva came out and did everything we thought they would do, but they just did it a lot better than we thought they were.

"They just kicked our you know what and Geneva is a darn good team that will go deep in the playoffs."

Trouble started early for Grant when the Bulldogs' opening on-side kick attempt was handled by Geneva and gave the Vikings their first possession near midfield.

Modjeski capped a 7-play, 52-yard drive with a 2-yard touchdown run, and Ratay tossed his first touchdown pass four minutes later, hitting Mike Mayszak with a 32-yard strike that floated over two Grant defenders.

Modjeski started the second quarter by hitting Ratay with the halfback option TD pass and

lifted the Vikings to a 28-0 lead midway through the period with a 1-yard plunge.

"We always practice that play, and coach tells me to just throw it up there, and I saw Shaun open, so I put it up as high as I could," said Modjeski, who also gained 77 yards on 12 carries.

The Vikings delivered the knockout blow when they took possession of the ball on their own 30-yard line with just 24 seconds left in the half. Ratay scrambled out of the pocket and lofted a 65-yard strike to Mayszak, who was knocked down at the Grant 5-yard line. With just four seconds left, Ratay slipped a 5-yard touchdown pass to Aaron O'Connell in the corner of the end zone.

"It was one of the last plays and I wasn't sure if coach wanted us to pass or not," Ratay said of his 65-yard completion. "They had one safety over the middle, and I was going to throw to the receiver he didn't cover. I scrambled off to one side and at the last second I saw Mayszak come open and I just threw it as far as I could."

Ratay finished off the offensive barrage early in the third quarter with an 11-yard scoring strike to Andrew Shad on a drive that was set up by Alex Springhorn's interception.

Grant tallied two fourth-quarter scores on touchdown runs by Pavel Zurkowski (24 yards) and Joey Claver (2 yards), who was the game's leading rusher with 85 yards on 19 carries.

Wicinski was pleased with his defense, particularly the linebacking corps that plugged most of Grant's running plays.

"They have just played well all year," Wicinski said.

Linebacker Pat Schiller said the defensive set with four linebackers worked well for the Vikings.

"Once we got the hang of their offense, we really got rolling," Schiller said. "Our defense wins us games and we definitely played good tonight."

Rous knew his squad was stifled by Geneva's defense, but he also had high praise for Ratay.

"He's a lot better than he looks on film," Rous said.

"He can really throw the ball, and he made our defensive linemen miss him, too. He's a heck of a player and I would sure take him on my team."