

# MORRIS DAILY HERALD



Winner of the 2006  
**James S. Copley  
Memorial Trophy**  
for best small daily  
newspaper in Illinois

Saturday, August 26, 2006

## WEEK 1: Geneva stuns No. 7 Morris

*Redskins suffer shutout loss to Vikings in grid opener*

By T.G. Smith

Saturday, August 26, 2006



Morris' Brenton Valentine attempts to make the catch while being pursued by Geneva's Kurt Smentek during the Vikings' 37-0 victory against the Redskins at Geneva. (Photo courtesy of the Kane County Chronicle)

GENEVA - Legendary coach Jerry Auchstetter coached at Geneva the last time the Vikings shut out the Redskins. Way back in the fall of 1977, Geneva bested the Morris gridders via shutout, winning the Little Seven Conference contest, 21-0.

One has to go back 19 years to find the last victory by Geneva over Morris. On that fall date in 1987, the Vikings prevailed.

On Friday night, Geneva's football team exacted a little revenge against the locals and in the process delivered a very convincing 37-0 win against the Redskins. Last year Geneva lost twice to Morris, once in the regular season and once in the 6A playoffs.

"It was a bit of payback for us," Geneva coach Rob Wicinski admitted. "Still, it was never about revenge for us. We simply want to be like Morris and want to try and duplicate the things that they have done over the years."

That duplication started right off the bat in the season opener for both teams. Just one year ago, Morris running back John Dergo broke the first run from scrimmage for 61 yards and a score against Geneva. This time around, it was Geneva running back Chris Modjeski's turn. In an eerily similar run to Dergo's, Modjeski broke off right tackle and bolted 56 yards on the Vikings' first touch on offense.

"Yeah, it was pretty similar, wasn't it," Morris coach George Dergo said. "It was like deja vu in reverse."

As it turned out, that would be the least of the worries for Dergo and company as Geneva scored in each of its first three possessions and once more before halftime to bolt out to a 25-0 lead at intermission.

Modjeski's score came at 10:18 of the first quarter and the kick made it 7-0. Morris had gone three and out after receiving the opening kickoff and Geneva turned the first Redskins' turnover of the year - an interception by Jacob Conforti - into more points when Michael Mayszak touched paydirt on a 46-yard pass from Vikings quarterback Shaun Ratay. That came at 7:37 - but the kick failed, leaving the score at 13-0.

Another three and out series followed, which led to the most impressive drive of the game by Geneva. The Vikings put together a 15-play drive that covered 74 yards in 6:39. Ratay capped that long sojourn by pushing in a quarterback sneak from the 1. Ratay's two-point pass failed, though, and the score sat at 19-0.

Morris finally got a stop on defense when Joe Kingman intercepted a Ratay pass, but the Redskins' offense continued to sputter, and punted again.

The Vikings utilized a seven-play drive to score at the end of the first half with 2:50 to go. Ratay connected with Mayszak again,

this time for 17 yards to conclude the first-half scoring.

Geneva wrapped up the scoring in the second half on a pair of TD passes from Ratay to Joe Augustine - one in the third quarter of 15 yards from Ratay and another in the fourth on a 20-yard hookup with backup QB Steve Diemand - to account for the 37-0 final.

Offensively, the Vikings got 191 yards passing from Ratay and 211 yards passing overall. Ratay completed 12-of-15 passes, while Diemand was 1-for-1. On the ground, Modjeski ran for 196 yards in 22 carries.

"They have a veteran quarterback and he picked us apart. And up front, they had some horses," Dergo said. "We needed to get lower on them to fill in and the linebackers needed to make tackles. I'm not sure why that didn't happen."

On the other end of the spectrum comes the particularly horrifying offensive numbers by the Morris offense. In total, the locals recorded just five first downs on the night, the first of which didn't come until 3:28 left in the third quarter.

At halftime, the Redskins sported but 21 yards of total offense and they had only 42 total yards with 6:08 left in the game when Tim Perry clipped off a 36-yard run. By far, Perry was the leading ground-gainer for Morris, netting 41 yards in eight carries.

Through the air, Morris had just three completions, one by starting quarterback Brenton Valentine and two by backup Drew Hanson. Together, they were 3-of-14 for 14 yards. Geneva collected three interceptions.

"I thought that we could win and the players thought that we could win, but I never thought that it would happen in that fashion," Wicinski said. "Still, I do believe that this is the best defense that I have ever had here. We have size, speed, experience and depth."

## **Related Links**