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It's knot all bad

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By [RICK ARMSTRONG](#) Staff writer

GENEVA -- It wasn't surprising that Batavia beat Geneva on Friday night to grab a share of the Western Sun Conference football title. The one-sided manner in which the Bulldogs did it was the shocker.

Batavia dominated, running 67 plays to the hosts' 32 and claiming a 388-109 edge in total yards on the way to a 24-6 victory.

"I guess that's why they play all the games," said Batavia senior quarterback Alex Schroeder, who passed for 161 yards and one score and rushed for 73 yards and another score.

"We were the underdog coming into this game. I think sometimes that's the best place to be, because you've got nothing to lose out there."

The decision, combined with Kaneland's 44-6 win over Yorkville, leaves all three teams 8-1 overall and 6-1 in the new conference. Can the trophy be sliced three ways?

"We were Geneva's biggest fans last Friday night (when the Vikings upended the Knights) so we'd get a chance to get this conference championship," Schroeder said. "Geneva came through for us. Unfortunately, we had to put them down this week."

Batavia coach Mike Gaspari said the win was special because it guarantees his team will open the playoffs with a home game.

"No matter what the outcome tonight, the season starts over," he said.

Geneva was held to 69 yards in the first half and just 40 in the second half. The Vikings lost three fumbles in the game, but the two they coughed up in the first half couldn't be converted into points by the Bulldogs.

Batavia was pinned back at its own 5 after a 60-yard punt by Brian Maurovich late in the first quarter and used three runs to push the ball out to the 17. Then Schroeder and Alex Warner hooked up for a big play that gave Batavia the lead for good.

Warner went in motion and then cut out down the sideline and beat one-on-one coverage.

"He thought he could get outside on his guy," Schroeder said. "I threw it up there for him and he ran under it and made a heckuva play on it."

Not so, Warner said.

"Shroeder put the ball exactly to a tee where it needed to be," he said. "My job doesn't get any easier. I've just got to hold my arms out and run into the end zone."

The key sequence in the game came early in the third quarter, said Geneva coach Rob Wicinski, whose team went three-and-out after the break.

"If that's the best we can come up with after halftime, we don't deserve to win," he said.

Batavia took over at its own 9 following the punt and proceeded to march 91 yards in 17 plays, eating up 8 minutes and 46 seconds on the clock. Tailback Tharyn Wright, moved to offense last week and playing both ways, capped it with a 1-yard plunge with 1:30 left in the quarter.

"We just had to keep grinding every single play," Wright said. "We played one of our best games of the season."

Wright finished with 110 yards rushing on 25 carries.

"That drive was instrumental," said Batavia coach Mike Gaspari. "To take it 90-something yards and we did eat up most of the third quarter and kept the ball out of the hands of a very difficult offense to defend."

Geneva then lost a fumble on the ensuing kickoff, setting the Bulldogs up at the 26. Four plays later, Schroeder faked to Wright, spun and went off right tackle and cut it to the left for an 18-yard scoring run to decide it.

"Being a quarterback, they don't account for you all the time and you get some easy runs," Schroeder said. "I saw them blitzing off the edge and our line did an awesome job and it opened up a lane inside. I don't know how I stayed on my feet."

The Bulldogs limited Geneva quarterback Shaun Ratay to 8 of 19 passing for 73 yards and one score, an 11-yard pass to Michael Mayszak that pulled the Vikings within 21-6 with 9:28 left in the game.

Batavia's Brian Wong closed out the scoring with a 27-yard field goal that followed a failed onside kick.

The Bulldogs' Brandon Holl, who rushed 12 times for 44 yards, also saw action on defense as did defensive end Mike Garrity (offensive tackle).

"The last three weeks or so, we've tried to keep our very best players on the field as much as we can," Gaspari said. "It's just the time of year you have to do that."

Wicinski said turnovers were also key.

"That was a playoff game and you get in the playoffs and lose the battle of the turnovers, you're gonna lose the game," he said. "That was a good old-fashioned butt-whipping. They've got some momentum going now and we're kind of climbing uphill."