

# Make room at the top

Batavia 24, Geneva 6

Why the Bulldogs won: The Bulldogs held the ball for 35:48, forced four turnovers and held Geneva to 94 yards, 201 yards fewer than Batavia rang up.

Turning point: The Vikings went three-and-out on the first drive of the second half and Batavia made them pay. The Bulldogs went on a 17-play, 91-yard drive that took 8:46 and was capped by Tharryn Wright's 1-yard touchdown run to make it 13-0.

Outstanding player of the game: Batavia senior quarterback Alex Schroeder did it with his arms and his legs in the win. He was 9-for-14 passing for 160 yards, including an 83-yard touchdown strike to Alex Warner. He also ran for 70 yards and a score in 18 carries.

GENEVA – Batavia's football team did something that no other team had been able to do to Geneva all season.

The Bulldogs' defense shut down the high-powered Vikings offense, and Batavia posted a staggering 24-6 Western Sun Conference win Friday night in the regular-season finale for both teams.

Geneva had scored 300 points in its first eight games, but was held to only 94 yards of total offense in the loss. The Batavia win and Kaneland's 44-6 win against Yorkville created tri-champions in the inaugural season of the WSC.

"I'm so proud of these guys because these are the best friends I've ever had," Batavia senior linebacker Tharryn Wright said. "We were coming in against a lot of adversity. We came on the road and got one. We played our best game of the season tonight."

Playing in front of a sold-out crowd at Burgess Field, Batavia (8-1, 6-1) grabbed the lead in the first quarter.

Four plays after Geneva's Brian Maurovich boomed a 60-yard punt to bury the Bulldogs at their own 5-yard line, Batavia quarterback Alex Schroeder and receiver Alex Warner hooked up on a pretty 83-yard pitch-and-catch to take a 7-0 lead.

"I'd probably say he's the fastest kid in the conference," Schroeder said. "He felt that he could get past his guy and I trusted him on it and threw it up to him, and he ran right under it and made a huge play. I think that really swung the momentum our way."

That lead stood until the third quarter, thanks to Geneva (8-1, 6-1) managing only five first downs in the first half.

Despite the first-half woes, Geneva was still in the game and set to receive the second-half kickoff. The Vikings did not manage a first down on the drive, though, and Batavia took over.

"The key was the first drive in the second half – if we could have gotten something there," Geneva coach Rob Wicinski said. "But we went three and out. If that's the best we could come up with at halftime, we don't deserve to win. More power to them."

Batavia then embarked on a 17-play, 91-yard drive that ate up 8:46, capped by Wright's 1-yard touchdown plunge to make it 13-0.

"The kids executed extremely well," Batavia coach Mike Gaspari said. "That's a tough defense to take the ball 91 yards on. It's a special effort on the part of the kids. I can't say enough about how our kids played. Just a great effort all the way around."

Geneva fumbled the ensuing kickoff, and four plays later, Schroeder streaked in from 18 yards out to make it 21-0 and put the game out of reach.

Wright had a huge night in his first game carrying the offensive load. Installed into the offense only two weeks ago, Wright carried the ball 25 times for 113 yards.

"It's just a neat experience to actually contribute to the game instead of just being on the defensive side of the ball," Wright said. "I actually contribute to the points on the board."

Batavia held Geneva to 34 yards rushing, forced four turnovers and held the ball a crippling 35:42 in the game.

Geneva entered the game ranked third in Class 6A by The Associated Press, while Batavia was ranked sixth. The Vikings had not even been tested all year until a 24-21 win against Kaneland last week.

"That was a good, old-fashioned butt-whooping," Wicinski said. "They deserved to win that game."

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