

WSC in Geneva's hands

Why the Vikings won: The Vikings built a 24-7 lead before holding on for dear life against a furious fourth-quarter comeback by Kaneland. Mike Mayszak's interception in the final minutes sealed the win.

Turning point: After trading touchdowns in the first quarter, Geneva took control of the game by running the ball. Chris Modjeski scored on a 17-yard run in the second and a 45-yard run in the third.

Outstanding player of the game: Geneva senior Chris Modjeski controlled the game on the ground, gaining 167 yards on 30 carries to help the Vikings keep the high-powered Kaneland offense off the field.

GENEVA – Geneva's football team summoned an old friend in its 24-21 win Friday night against Kaneland.

With the Knights on the verge of completing an amazing comeback against the Vikings, Geneva senior quarterback Shaun Ratay implored his defense to remember fallen teammate Dustin Villarreal, who died last May.

"Me and [Chris Modjeski] asked Dustin to give us a stop," an emotional Ratay said. "We needed a stop. He gave us a stop. It was unbelievable. Wow."

With Ratay pointing to a white towel he had embroidered with the Vikings' logo and Villarreal's No. 66, Geneva junior Mike Mayszak intercepted Kaneland quarterback Boone Thorgesen for the second time in the game to end the Knights' chances.

"Shaun fires us up and inspires us to remember Dustin," Geneva senior linebacker Pat Schiller said. "Any time we're down or we need a stop, we all come together and say that Dustin would want us to stop this and Dustin would want to be here right now, so let's do it for him."

The interception put the brakes on a wild Kaneland rally. Geneva (8-0 overall, 6-0 Western Sun) took a 24-7 lead with 9:06 remaining in the fourth quarter on Brian Maruovich's 25-yard field goal.

But Kaneland (7-1, 5-1) struck quickly after the ensuing kickoff, with Thorgesen connecting with Casey Crosby for 59 yards on the first play of the drive. He hit Crosby again on fourth down from the 4 to cut the lead to 24-14.

Crosby had eight receptions for 192 yards.

"He's fantastic," Kaneland coach Joe Thorgesen said. "I think Boone and him have a great feel for one another. I haven't seen a combination as good as them this year."

Kaneland's Adam Blazek then recovered an onside kick, and Jamie Snyder took advantage of a defensive breakdown by the Vikings on the next play to get wide open. Boone Thorgesen found him from 49 yards out to cut the lead to 24-21 with 6:53 remaining in the game.

Those 14 Kaneland points came in 13 seconds.

"To see your kids come back like that in the fourth quarter, not get their heads down, make some big stops on defense, we're going to carry that into our preparation for the playoffs," Joe Thorgesen said. "It was a great comeback, and we're really proud of the kids."

Geneva zipped to a quick start after Mayszak intercepted Boone Thorgesen on the second play of the game. The Vikings embarked on a 14-play, 58-yard scoring drive after that, capped by Ratay's 13-yard scoring run on a broken play to open a 7-0 lead.

Boone Thorgesen hit Jody Henningson for a 61-yard touchdown three plays later. The Knights' senior quarterback completed 19-of-42 passes for 379 yards and three touchdowns, though he had a season-high three interceptions.

"What a competitor," Geneva coach Rob Wicinski said. "When you think he's down, he's almost down, he'd run some more. Our defense, we had to try to gang-tackle that kid. It was a real challenge, man. He's a heck of a player."

Touchdown runs of 17 and 45 yards from Chris Modjeski helped the Vikings take control of the game, played in front of a loud, overflow crowd. He gained 167 yards on 30 carries in the win.

"What I like is he finishes his runs," Wicinski said. "He's been the mainstay. Just a tough, tough kid."

Now the Vikings are in the driver's seat in the Western Sun race, the lone unbeaten remaining with a showdown with 7-1 Batavia next week.

Ratay will be sure to have his No. 66 towel on hand for that one, as well.

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