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Diemand steps out of shadows



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EAST ST. LOUIS – If somebody scoured the box scores for Geneva’s football games this season, the name of senior Steve Diemand was there in fine print a couple times.

That is the shred of publicity a backup quarterback gets while sitting behind a healthy, effective starter.

Until that backup is needed to step in, at a moment’s notice.

So after completing only 2 of 4 passes for 15 yards and an interception all season, Diemand was summoned into the game Saturday when senior quarterback Mike Mayszak broke his collarbone in the first quarter of Geneva’s 34-26 Class 7A state quarterfinal loss to East St. Louis.

With Diemand under center, the Vikings overcame a 26-6 halftime deficit to tie the game on the first play of the fourth quarter. They never were able to take the lead, but Diemand finally got his shot.

“It means so much,” Diemand said.

“This has been my dream ever since I was a kid. Not playing for four years was rough, but I always dressed to play. I came to play today.”

The stats were not a thing of beauty – 7-of-19 passing for 47 yards and three interceptions. But Diemand was the one running the team for the final three quarters, with the Vikings either losing or tied against the mighty Flyers, in a hostile environment, five hours from home.

“I am so proud of him,” Geneva coach Rob Wicinski said after pulling Diemand aside after the game for a private moment. “It’s not like he gets a ton of reps in practice, either. He lives the life of the second-string quarterback. You just never know when your number is going to be called. That may be the toughest spot on the gosh-darn team.”

The time came for Diemand with 4:34 left in the first quarter. Mayszak was trying to make something happen on a third-and-10 when he threw across his body, and Kraig Appleton stepped in front of the pass and took it 79 yards for a touchdown, breaking a 6-all tie.

While everybody was focused on the return, Mayszak was driven into the ground and said he felt his right collarbone “snap” as he hit the ground.

For Mayszak, it had to be a nightmare. He had never broken his right collarbone before, but he’s broken his left collarbone four times.

While it was a horrible blow for Mayszak, Diemand had the break that he’s waited on for four years.

“When Mayszak went down, and I’m sorry he did, I was there for the team,” Diemand said. “I wanted to step in and do the best I could. It was tough, and I’m really sad I couldn’t get it done.”

Diemand’s first seven passes did not go as well as he would have liked. The first four were incomplete, followed by a completion for minus-1 yard and two interceptions.

But Diemand hit Joe Augustine for a 9-yard catch and a first down as part of the game-tying drive late in the third quarter. He also had a 12-yard completion to Brennan Quinn to keep another drive alive, and ran for two other first downs.

"He shows up every day at practice," Geneva senior Jordan Boser said. "He always works. It was great to see him get out there."

And Wicinski knows that just the experience of getting onto the field at East St. Louis, in a state quarterfinal game, in his senior season, made the four years of preparation worth it for Diemand.

"He really showed his leadership and his commitment to the program," Wicinski said. "I'm so proud of him. Lifetime of memories. When he's our age, he'll be saying that he completed [the final pass]. That's just awesome for him."

You can't blame Diemand if the day's events become a tall tale in the years to come.

Finally, he was more than just another line in a box score.

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COMMENTS

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