



Geneva 24, Rochelle 15

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The potent Rochelle running game has had opposing defensive coordinators reaching for the Roloids this season.

That changed on Friday night at Geneva.

The host Vikings showed that they can run the ball as they ran past the Hubs 24-15 to clinch, at the very least, a tie for a Western Sun Conference championship.

Running back Michael Ratay led the charge for the Vikings with 147 yards on 23 carries. While still not totally 100 percent recovered from an early season ankle injury, 10 of Ratay's 23 rushes went for 6 yards or more.

"We came out and looked to do whatever we could," Ratay said. "Their guys are big and they hit hard but we just pounded the ball."

Geneva (7-0, 5-0) rushed for 256 yards and held the Hubs, who were averaging over 325 rushing yards per game, to under 200. The Hubs also struggled with field position, beginning 8 of their 10 drives from their own 29 or worse.

"The offense has been a process," Geneva coach Rob Wicinski said. "We survived our early (season) mistakes and are now doing what we're supposed to in the hunt of the season."

The Vikings looked to jump on the Hubs from the very beginning as Joe Augustine returned the opening kickoff 67 yards. But, even with the prime field position, the Vikings weren't able to score as quarterback Mike Mayszak threw his first interception of the season.

Rochelle (5-2, 3-2) responded with an 11-play drive that culminated on Devon Mancillas' 7-yard touchdown run. After a two-point conversion the Hubs led 8-0.

It remained that way until the second quarter when Sean Grady busted up the middle for a 13-yard touchdown run. After his PAT the Vikings trailed 8-7.

Then the Vikings thwarted Rochelle's 10-play drive with a key stop on a fourth down. With the momentum swinging in their favor, they answered with Drew Fagot's 63-yard touchdown run up the middle with 3:44 remaining in the first half.

"It's great to see those guys do that," Ratay said. "You get to see my name all the time and all these guys and the o-line make us look good. Drew broke up the middle, the linebacker moved over and then he just used his speed."

The Vikings looked ready to put the game away in the second half. After Mayszak's 38-yard touchdown pass to Augustine early in the third quarter, they forced a three-and-out by the Hubs, but then turned the ball over on the ensuing possession.

Then, they came up with a huge stop at the goal line on 4th and goal, but fumbled the ball away on the next play. That resulted in a 1-yard touchdown by Mancillas with 8:43 left in the contest, cutting the Vikings' lead to 21-15.

"I think to hold that team to 15 points is something," Wicinski said. "The goal-line stand was nice and giving the ball back doesn't diminish it. They're playing with a lot of confidence."