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No horsin' around

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 Comments (No comments posted.)

GENEVA – How appropriate on Breeders' Cup weekend that Geneva's football team found itself a mudder Friday night.

Junior Michael Ratay plowed through the driving rain and muddy conditions to the tune of 309 yards and a superfecta of touchdowns – four to those not up on horse-racing lingo – in the Vikings' 35-6 IHSA Class 7A first-round playoff win against Bradley-Bourbonnais.

Ratay scored from 10 and 12 yards out in the first quarter as Geneva built a 14-0 lead. He then scored from 12 and 29 yards out in the fourth quarter to put the game away and set up a much-anticipated Round 2 matchup with St. Charles East next weekend at Geneva.

"That is a little bit overwhelming," Geneva coach Rob Wicinski said when he learned of Ratay's rushing total. "He's just gotten better all year. I guess the field conditions were really to his liking."

The only Geneva touchdown not scored by Ratay came after the biggest break of the game. Geneva senior Mike Mayszak punted to Boilermakers sophomore Austin Ringo, who broke off a long return and was the recipient of a personal foul at the end of his run.

But instead of being set up deep in Geneva territory, Bradley-Bourbonnais (5-5 overall) had to give the ball back after getting called for roughing Mayszak.

Ratay then broke off runs of 32 and 25 yards after receiving new life to set up Mayszak's 4-yard touchdown pass to Jordan Boser, making it 21-6 Geneva.

"That turned the game around and gave us the momentum," Geneva senior Jake Conforti said.

Three plays later, Conforti picked off Boilermakers quarterback Travis Molinga and returned it 30 yards. That set up Ratay's 12-yard scoring run that pushed the lead to 28-6.

"When it came down to the fourth quarter, I knew we would be able to come away with the victory," Ratay said. "We always say the fourth quarter is our quarter. We've won a lot of games in the fourth quarter. We have to play well in the fourth quarter to win games like this."

Geneva (10-0) dominated early, but allowed the Boilermakers to score in the closing moments of the first half.

Bradley-Bourbonnais' Joe Sherman blocked Mayszak's punt to set the Boilermakers up at Geneva's 38-yard line. Molinga hit Jeff Bracken from 17 yards out to cut the score to 14-6 just 5 seconds before halftime.

"I did feel like we were in control, but we let it slip away a little bit in the first half," Wicinski said. "I thought we could have put a dagger in them, but we had some penalties, and the next thing you know, with the way they popped that pass in the corner, you felt like they could do that at any time. I didn't feel really good until we got that 28 up on the board, really."

The Boilermakers play the majority of their games on artificial turf, so the muddy conditions wreaked havoc on their



Bradley-Bourbonnais was unable to contain Geneva running back Michael Ratay (center), who ran for 309 yards and four touchdowns on a rainy, muddy Friday night in Geneva. The Vikings won, 35-6, in the first round of the IHSA Class 7A football playoffs. (Kendra Helmer photo)

misdirection-oriented, spread offense.

For Ratay, however, it was mostly straight-line running behind his offensive line of Bryce Biel, Greg Gregory, John McNeil, Anthony Miller, Taylor Reed and Eric Strauss that led to a day sure to live in Geneva annals for years to come.

"He's just a playmaker for us," Conforti said. "I've been playing with him since I was 8, so I'm pretty used to it by now. He's the best back in the state."

COMMENTS

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