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## Vikings clinch Western Sun title

October 6, 2007

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GENEVA -- The defense didn't rest.

It was a performance that gave an old linebacker like Geneva coach Rob Wicinski reason to smile. His Viking defense controlled Rochelle's run-dominated wing-T attack Friday while his offense did its part to claim a 24-15 decision that wrapped up the Western Sun Conference title.

It's the fourth straight league championship for the Vikings, who are 7-0 overall and 5-0 in the league.

"We set our goals and that's one of them," said Wicinski. "The other is to get in the playoffs.

"To be 7-0 is a little bit of a surprise. Every game we played this year I've felt we could lose and every game I felt we could win. You just don't know. The kids have played hard."

Geneva spotted the Hubs an early 8-0 lead before the defense settled in and closed the door.

Joe Augustine took the opening kickoff 67 yards to give the Vikings the ball at the Rochelle 28. They drove to the 5, but quarterback Michael Mayszak threw his first interception of the year. It was one of two picked off by Nate Eyster.

"We tell our receivers when they get to the sideline and they're not open to turn it up," said Wicinski. "The kid did a great job defensively and wiped our receiver out and (Mayszak) launched it in there."

Rochelle then marched 80 yards in 11 plays, gaining 68 on the ground and 12 on a pass interference penalty. Devan Mancillas (16 carries, 104 yards) capped the drive with a 7-yard scoring run and quarterback Alex Prough passed to Jeff Ruppenthal for the two-point conversion.

Geneva's defense then got to work, led by linemen Cory Hofstetter, Frank Boenzi, Andrew Clausen and Matt Caliendo and linebackers Brennan Quinn and Jordan Boser, among others. Rochelle was limited to just 51 yards, all on the ground, and two first downs the rest of the half.

"Honestly, we were all assigned a man, so we hit that man. We don't know where the ball's going (with that offense)," said defensive back Jake Conforti who broke up two tackles and made a touchdown saving tackle.

"It's a great offense and they execute it so well," said Wicinski. "They're weaned on it as youngsters and those coaches know it inside and out. We read textbooks and went to clinics over the summer to try to figure it out. It's tough because everything you try to make an adjustment to, (Rochelle coach Kevin Crandall) has an adjustment for.

"It turns into a big old chess match. Finally, it gets down to your kids wanting to play."

Meanwhile, the Geneva offense was taking advantage of great field position. The Vikings average starting point for 10 possessions was their own 46-yard line.

"Our defense has done a great job all year of getting us great field position. It's normally like half the field. We haven't had many long drives," said Wicinski.

Sean Grady, who would kick a 32-yard field goal in the fourth to seal the win, capped a 45-

yard scoring drive with a 12-yard burst up the middle for a score with 9:42 left in the second quarter. One possession later, Drew Fagot went up the middle and bolted 63 yards for another score.

Mayszak hooked up with Augustine on a post pattern that went 38 yards for a score in the third quarter.

In between, workhorse Michael Ratay was pounding the Hub defense, finishing with 129 yards in 23 carries.

"Michael keeps getting stronger as the year goes on. I hope the offensive line does, too," said Wicinski. "(Ratay) ran hard tonight."

In the fourth quarter Geneva stopped the Hubs at the 1, but a fumbled exchange on the very next play gave Rochelle the ball back and Mancillas pounded in from the 1.

"I was really pleased with the defense," said Wicinski. "That goal line stand was outstanding. Too bad we gave it right back (on a fumble), but there was a lot of belief out there that they could do it. Even though they (eventually) got the points, I thought it was huge for the next few drives Rochelle had."