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## Vikings' offense takes flight

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GENEVA – After a couple weeks of inclement weather that made passing difficult, Geneva's football team hoped to balance out its offense in Friday's IHSA Class 7A second-round playoff game against St. Charles East.

Quarterback Mike Mayszak and receiver Joe Augustine did better than that.

They hooked up on two long touchdown catches that paced the Vikings' 35-14 win against the Saints. The scores were from 64 and 43 yards out and were part of 28 unanswered points to end the game for the Vikings. Geneva uncharacteristically gained more yards passing than rushing, 209 to 147.

"It feels good," said Augustine, who caught five passes for 137 yards a week after getting shut out against Bradley-Bourbonnais. "I tried to keep my head in it. I knew we were going to throw it. I just wanted to be ready when my number was called."

The Vikings tied the school record with 11 wins, and will meet today's winner between East St. Louis and Moline in the state quarterfinals.

Augustine's first touchdown catch came after St. Charles East (8-3) took a 14-7 lead with 9:35 remaining in the second quarter. East quarterback Sam Gunther got away from Geneva's pressure and hit Matt Hammer (eight catches, 118 yards) for a 62-yard touchdown pass.

"It was just a play you usually hit in the first window," Gunther said. "I saw the blitz come, so I knew I had to step up and get to the second window and make a play. Hammer has done that all season."

After forcing a three-and-out, the Saints had a chance to take a two-possession lead. They had the ball second-and-5 at Geneva's 33-yard line, but were called for a holding penalty followed by a Frank Boenzi sack to turn the momentum. Three plays after East punted, Augustine broke free thanks to a great downfield block by Michael Faught to tie the score at 14-all.

"If we get in there and go up 21-7, it changes the complexion of what they can call," East coach Ted Monken said.

East went three-and-out the next time it had the ball, and the Vikings (11-0) finished the half with a go-ahead score. Michael Ratay's 2-yard touchdown run, his second of three scores on the night, was set up by a 43-yard, fourth-down catch by linebacker Jordan Boser, his fourth catch of the season. Geneva led, 21-14, at the break.

"We talked about it before the game," Mayszak said. "If we got down, we couldn't get discouraged. We talked about if they scored first, we had to come back and answer, and we did. It kind of gets us more focused when they come out and score first."

The Saints had a hard time coming back when they were forced almost exclusively to pass in the second half. They had only four second-half first downs, all passing. They ran for minus-8 yards in the half, thanks in large part to Geneva's pressure.

The Vikings harassed Gunther into six sacks and a lost fumble, the only turnover for either team, in the game. Boenzi had two of the sacks, and Boser, Matt Caliendo, Trevor Hyslop and Brennan Quinn also added sacks.

"It was mostly cover sacks," Boser said. "Everybody had their guy and the line did a great job. There were a couple of times where [Gunther] would look out and try to dump it off to the flat, and somebody was standing there. There was nobody to throw to, and the big guys got to him."

Augustine and Mayszak hooked up from 43 yards out in the third quarter and Ratay scored from 18 yards out on a fourth-down play to cap the scoring in the final quarter. Ratay ran for 133 yards on 27 carries and now has 27

rushing scores on the season.

Mayszak completed 9 of 17 passes for 207 yards with no interceptions in the win.

"We've had the ability to do that," Geneva coach Rob Wicinski said. "The last four weeks, I figured for us to have a deep run in the playoffs, we had to get [Augustine] going. We've been practicing real hard on that. We just hadn't shown it in games."

If Moline wins today, the Vikings will be at home again next weekend. If the Flyers win, the Vikings will have similar travel arrangements as Batavia in Round 1.

"We don't care who wins," Mayszak said. "We just want to play another game. Our goal is three more games."

## COMMENTS

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