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Ratay, Vikings win WSC outright

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 Comments (No comments posted.)

MAPLE PARK – Michael Ratay's performance Friday ensured the continuation of one streak and the end of another.

Accounting for 313 yards from scrimmage and six touchdowns, the Geneva running back led the Vikings to a 61-21 pasting of Kaneland to keep Geneva's perfect season intact heading into a Week 9 showdown next week at Batavia.

The win also gives Geneva the outright Western Sun Conference title after sharing honors a season ago with Batavia and Kaneland.

"We're proud of that [conference championship]," Vikings coach Rob Wicinski said. "That was kind of our focus coming in. They were trying to stay in the playoffs, and our goal was to have an outright championship. There was a lot of talk on that. That was our motivation."

After dropping their fifth game of the season, meanwhile, the Knights will not be in the postseason for the first time since 1994.

"What can you say; we lost [61]-21," Kaneland coach Tom Fedderly said. "I don't know what to say, guys, we got our butts kicked."

Geneva (8-0 overall, 6-0 WSC), playing with short fields thanks to the punt returns of Sean Grady, jumped out to a 21-0 first quarter lead on rushing scores from Drew Fagot, Ratay and Mike Mayszak.

After the Knights (3-5, 2-4) got on the scoreboard with an 8-yard touchdown pass from Jody Henningson to Brian Claesson, Ratay, who rushed for only 14 yards on his first six carries, took over.

First came the 90-yard touchdown run midway through the second quarter to give the Vikings a 28-7 lead.

On his next touch – two drives later – Ratay scampered in from 40 yards out to put Geneva up, 35-14, set up by a Joe Augustine kickoff return.

On the first play from scrimmage of Geneva's subsequent drive, Ratay again broke loose, sprinting 52 yards to the Kaneland 10. He finished off the drive with a 9-yard run, then a 1-yard scoring plunge to give the Vikings a 41-14 halftime lead.

For an exclamation point, Ratay added a pair of second-half scores – one on a 45-yard screen pass from Mayszak (213 yards passing and two passing scores) and the other a cutback-laden 31-yard run.

"Most of those long runs, I didn't get touched. ... The holes were huge," Ratay said. "It was great blocking by everyone. ... That was, I don't know, I don't know. That was pretty ridiculous. But all those yards were the offensive line."

The Geneva defense, meanwhile, untethered by the threat of a Kaneland running game, which went for only 13 yards, let loose on Henningson (26-of-52 for 272 yards, two passing scores and two interceptions).

"You know what, our interior line got really good pressure on him and made him throw the ball early and into the passing lanes," said Geneva defensive lineman Cory Hofstetter, who had an interception and a fumble recovery. "You just have to get your hands up and you get picks."

So, for the Vikings, the question is, how long can you enjoy this one with the Bulldogs looming?

"The whole week will be an enjoyment," Wicinski said. "Just to get into Batavia and play again and go to their place – it's going to be exciting. ... We're excited, let's go, do it up."

Geneva 61, Kaneland 21

Why the Vikings won: Geneva limited the Knights to 13 yards on the ground, while racking up 324 rushing yards of their own behind Michael Ratay. The Mike Mayszak-led passing game, meanwhile, required just eight completions to cover 213 yards.

Turning point: After Jody Henningson hooked up with Blake Kendrick on a 45-yard touchdown pass to cut the Geneva lead to 28-14, Joe Augustine returned the ensuing kickoff to the Knights' 40. On the first play of the drive, Ratay ran in for the score. After that, the Vikings' lead would never dip below 20.

Most outstanding player: Ratay piled up 313 total yards and six touchdowns, gashing the Kaneland defense with big plays.

COMMENTS

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