



What a rush for Vikes

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Before his team squared off against Bradley-Bourbonnais in the Class 7A opening round Friday night, Geneva football coach Rob Wicinski asked his assistants if they thought Viking running back Michael Ratay was a "mudder" -- a guy who would do well in the sloppy conditions at Burgess Field.

Silly question.

Ratay answered it with a career night, rushing for a stunning 310 yards in 35 carries and 4 touchdowns to lead Geneva past the Boilermakers 35-6 and onto a second-round date against St. Charles East.

"Oh my gosh, 310 yards, I didn't realize it was that much, that is a little bit overwhelming, but it is the playoffs and we fed the beast tonight," Wicinski said of his star back. "I guess the field conditions were really to his liking."

Bradley-Bourbonnais (5-5) could not make the same claim. Playing and practicing mostly on artificial turf in the Southwest Suburban Red Division, the Boilermakers struggled mightily in the quagmire with only 125 total yards and 5 first downs.

"We were concerned about that team and they did show signs of flying to the ball and stuff, but we got up early and their offense just really struggled in this stuff," Wicinski said.

The Vikings didn't take long to unleash Ratay as he carried five times in a 6-play, 68-yard scoring drive on Geneva's opening possession, finishing it off with a 13-yard touchdown run on a pitchout. The extra point was blocked.

Geneva (10-0) put the Boilermakers back on their heels by making it 14-0 in just three plays on their second drive, starting from the Vikings 20-yard line. But Ratay rattled off 70 of those yards in one jaunt, and finished it with an 11-yard scoring scamper.

Quarterback Michael Mayszak pulled up from his holder position on the extra point attempt and glided in for the 2-point conversion.

"Once again, every week the offensive line has been stepping up huge," Ratay said in giving credit to his linemen. "I didn't have to make a lot of cuts, it was just running straight, and I got the ball a lot tonight."

After the Boilermakers blocked a Geneva punt and turned it into a 17-yard touchdown pass from Travis Moliga to Jeff Bracken with only five seconds left in the first half, the game stayed tight until the fourth quarter.

The evening turned in Geneva's favor for good early in the fourth when Bradley-Bourbonnais was whistled for roughing the kicker on a punt attempt, allowing the Vikings to keep possession on their own 38-yard line.

When Ratay broke loose for 33 yards on the next play and rumbled 26 more moments later, Geneva was set to take a 21-6 lead when Mayszak flipped a 4-yard, play-action pass to a wide open Jordan Boser.

Ratay finished things off with a 12-yard TD run set up by a Jake Conforti interception, and a 29-yard TD run

with just over three minutes left in the game.

Geneva linebacker Brennan Quinn knew his team benefited from the rainy weather.

"That team had more speed than us, but we could see that we were more even with them than if it was dry," Quinn said. "The defensive line was making a good push tonight, but it was so hard to get a sack because of the footing."

The Vikings' date with St. Charles East next weekend will mark the first time the teams have played each other since the late 1970s, after years of traditionally opening the season against each other -- which the teams will do again next year.