



With heavy hearts, Chargers fall to Geneva

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The rain-soaked turf at Burgess Field in Geneva didn't provide a soft landing for the visiting Dundee-Crown Chargers in the season-opening football game Saturday night.

It was a hard landing for the Chargers, who were playing with heavy hearts because of the death of a teammate's father, as the Vikings followed the lead of halfback Michael Ratay's three touchdowns in rolling to a 34-7 victory.

Charger running back Matt Cutinello learned about seven hours before kickoff that his 49-year-old father, Doug Cutinello, had suddenly passed away of natural causes.

But he chose to play the game, and his mother also attended the contest.

"It kind of put everything in perspective," Chargers coach Mike Davis said of Doug Cutinello's sudden passing. "Matt was all nervous about the game, and then I get this phone call about what happened, and the importance of the game went out the window."

Davis said it was a hard blow because Doug Cutinello was "probably the biggest supporter of athletics at Dundee-Crown and he was one of those parents who never said a bad word, always positive, and all of the kids knew him.

"It was hard, but the kids rallied around Matt and played as hard as they could," Davis said. "I never had to do this before, so I didn't know what to say. You just try to keep everything in perspective. We lost the game, big deal. Matt lost his father."

While Geneva dominated the game, piling up a 28-0 lead at halftime, the Dundee-Crown fans had their big cheer in the fourth quarter when Matt Cutinello scored his team's only touchdown on a 6-yard run.

"I did it all for my dad tonight," Cutinello said. "I talked with mom about it (playing the game) and I knew my dad would have been here and he would have loved to see me play."

"It felt awesome to play again," said Cutinello, who missed last year with an injury. "Last year I had a 28-yard run and fumbled just before I scored, so this felt good tonight to get the touchdown."

Ratay, who missed his sophomore season last year with an injury, made up for lost time with touchdown runs of 3 and 16 yards in the first quarter, and a 1-yard scoring plunge in the third. He finished with 16 carries and 83 yards.

Geneva quarterback Michael Mayszak, who was a wide receiver last year, threw touchdown passes of 44 yards to Michael Faught late in the first quarter and a 34-yard scoring strike to a diving Joe Augustine in the second quarter. Mayszak finished the game with 8 of 15 passing for 164 yards.

Geneva's defense forced and recovered three fumbles that led to scores and held Dundee-Crown to 157 total yards.

Even with the emotional burden his team faced, Davis was proud of the Chargers' effort.

"It was not all bad for us tonight," Davis said. "We knew coming in here that Geneva is a very good team. You can't fumble the ball three times and expect to beat them.

"But we played them 7-7 in the second half, and I know they called the dogs off, but that was still good for us."