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9-0 Vikings in a league of their own



By Jay Schwab

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GENEVA – Not only did the Geneva football team treat the home crowd to one heck of a show Friday, the Vikings also disproved one of sports' most well-worn clichés.

When Batavia and Geneva get together – or insert the heated rivalry of your choice – you can throw the records out the window, as the saying goes.

Sometimes that holds true, and the lesser team rises up in a rivalry game and plays beyond what logic would suggest.

Sometimes, though, physical realities can not be budged, and the better team is just the better team, crackling emotions be darned.

Geneva was miles better than Batavia on Friday, when the Vikings were in full command for a 47-14 thrashing of the Bulldogs.

Turns out, the lightning delay, the rain, the mud – the rivalry itself, even – were mere distractions from the night's real story: around these parts, the Western Sun Conference champion Vikings are in their own league.

“We said snow, rain, wet it doesn't matter,” Geneva coach Rob Wicinski said of his message to the team this week. “This is Batavia. Let's just play some football.”

The Vikings' brand of football is something to behold, so impressive that it will be natural for Geneva backers today to look beyond whoever is the Vikings' first-round playoff matchup, deep into the Class 7A draw to imagine the possibilities.

Geneva running back Michael Ratay, who tore through Batavia 18 times for 353 rushing yards, demonstrated just how comfortable he is stampeding through late-season muck, a delightful sign with the weather unlikely to be much better when the calendar hits November.

“The kid's a player,” Wicinski said. “It doesn't matter what the conditions are.”

This was an odd installation of the area's premier football rivalry, a game in which the Bulldogs – winners of five straight before Friday's rout – were made to look like just another sacrificial lamb on Geneva's slate.

Hard to say which was the more bizarre announcement from the press box – that there was no score yet in the World Series game between Philadelphia and Tampa Bay (there was no game scheduled for Friday) – or the third-quarter bulletin that the mercy rule would take effect in a game between Batavia and Geneva.

As much as players and fans alike look forward to this game, something tells me the visitors from Batavia were ready to see that running clock.

Despite the rivalry's hoopla, neither team can let the raw emotions linger, not with only a week to prepare for the playoffs. Geneva defensive back Alexander Olenek doesn't mind the timing.

"We like this game being the last game," Olenek said. "Both teams are at their peak. It's a fun way to end the regular season."

It's questionable whether the Bulldogs were at their peak. Batavia fans better hope not.

What's not up for debate is whether this year's Batavia team is in the same class as Geneva.

Emotions loom large in sports, and rivalries are wonderful. This night, though, was about more tangible elements – strength, speed, tackling.

No need to throw out the records. Geneva's 9-0 speaks loud and clear.

• Jay Schwab is sports editor of the Kane County Chronicle. He can be reached at 630-845-5382 or jschwab@kcchronicle.com.

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