

[Print Page](#)

# Fagot thrilled to coach at state

By JAY SCHWAB  
[jschwab@kcchronicle.com](mailto:jschwab@kcchronicle.com)

CHAMPAIGN – For the Geneva football team, simply having assistant coach Marc Fagot on the field for Saturday's state championship game was a victory.

Fagot, the father of Geneva senior Drew Fagot, is battling life-threatening cancer that has made handling the grind of a long season challenging.

But Fagot persevered all the way to Memorial Stadium, there to share in all the emotions Saturday night.

The defeat failed to drag down Fagot's spirits.

"He said 'I had a great season, I just absolutely loved it,'" Geneva coach Rob Wicinski said. "He goes 'This is not a disappointment this year, this is awesome.'

"He was like that every day. Every day he came in like that."

While Fagot, a former college football player at Illinois, is an inspiration throughout the program, he worked especially closely with Michael Ratay and the other running backs.

"He's been my coach for two, almost three years now," Ratay said. "He's a great guy, he makes football fun at practice every day. He makes what we do out there fun."

Flags flying: It might not be much consolation to the Vikings, but the 33-14 loss to East St. Louis could have been worse.

The Flyers prevailed despite committing a state title game-record 19 penalties for 166 yards, including two that nullified touchdowns.

"We've been getting that all season," Flyers receiver Terry Hawthorne said. "I just had to keep the offense and the defense's head straight."

Geneva also contributed to the penalty parade. The Vikings were flagged eight times, four of which for illegal substitutions.

Wicinski said the boisterous crowd played a part.

"We brought a good crowd and they were really loud, East St. Louis brought a good crowd and they were very loud," Wicinski said. "It was a nice venue. I'd maybe get some [cue] cards next time."

Not done yet: It might come as a surprise to Geneva fans familiar with defensive end Cory Hofstetter's baseball exploits, but Hofstetter said after the game that he is leaning toward the pigskin path in college.

"Definitely football," said Hofstetter, who supplied another of his patented batted-down balls at the line of scrimmage. "I've loved coming out here every day. I've always been probably better at baseball and I've enjoyed it a lot, but there's nothing like a football game. There's no feeling in the world that matches it.

"I would love to go play on Saturdays at school. That would be my No. 1 goal right now."

Hofstetter, though, is likely to stir baseball recruiting interest, too, if he can match a junior season in which he hit .404

with 12 home runs and 38 RBIs.

Flyers rekindle championship tradition: Saturday marked East St. Louis' seventh IHSA state championship, but first since 1991.

The Flyers' storied tradition includes a memorable string of success under legendary former coach Bob Shannon in the 1980s and early 1990s.

"Seventeen years, that's a long time," Flyers receiver Terry Hawthorne said. "The 2008, 2009 class just had to come along and step it up."

Ratay mingled with some of the Flyers' stars after the game to salute their achievement.

"I try to congratulate each team, but these guys were good sports out there and they're [excellent] athletes," Ratay said. "I just wanted to tell them that they deserved it."

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