

 Daily Herald

# Geneva blows out Rockton Hononegah

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ROCKTON - After his team opened the Class 7A playoffs last week beating Rolling Meadows, Geneva coach Rob Wicinski told his players the days of 40-point blowouts are over, that the playoffs are a whole new level of intensity and four hard-fought quarters.

Perhaps not even Wicinski knows how good Geneva is.

Rockton Hononegah scored three touchdowns late in the fourth quarter against Geneva's backups, which only made the Vikings' 46-28 whipping look closer than it actually was.

If not for a couple blocked extra points in the second half, the Vikings would have had the running clock against Rockton (8-3). As it is, they had little trouble moving to 11-0 and into the Class 7A quarterfinals against Carmel (10-1) at Burgess Field, most likely Friday night.

"We came out here to prove a point, that we are for real," running back Michael Ratay said.

Who out there doesn't know that? It's now four quarterfinals in five years for Wicinski's powerhouse program.

"I'm really proud of them," said Wicinski, who added he was happiest to see his team commit just 1 penalty a week after being called for 16. "You never know what happens on the road. They really kept their poise."

The hundreds of Geneva fans who made the trip to Rockton saw the Vikings win like they have all year - with a little trickery thrown in - behind a first-string defense that held Rockton to 7 points and 5 more touchdowns from Ratay.

In addition to three rushing TDs, Ratay threw a touchdown and caught a touchdown pass - completing the same touchdown trifecta he pulled off last year against East St. Louis. He ran for 206 yards on 19 carries while totaling 316 all-purpose yards including a long kickoff return.

Like they have all year, offensive linemen Anthony Strauss, Anthony Miller, John McNeil, Bryce Biel and Greg Gregory opened the holes.

"I was pleased with the discipline on the offensive line," Wicinski said. "They made some adjustments in the second half and really did a nice job of executing some of those adjustments."

Just like last week, the first drive proved to be about the only time an opponent moved the ball against Geneva. Rockton marched 14 plays and ate 6:23 off the clock, converting a pair of third downs and a fourth down before the Vikings stuffed Rockton on 4th-and-1.

Scoreless after one quarter, that changed on the first play of the second when Drew Fagot rambled 58 yards up the middle for a 7-0 lead.

"The offense played great," senior linebacker Brennan Quinn said. "That helped the defense. They always were scoring every time they got the ball."

Ratay followed later in the second quarter with an 80-yard touchdown run. After Cory Hofstetter recovered a fumble and returned it to Rockton's 10-yard line, Wicinski went deeper into his playbook and called a

halfback option pass.

Ratay found quarterback Brandon Beitzel on a 5-yard touchdown pass on fourth and goal, putting Geneva ahead 21-0.

"I like gimmick plays and I like throwing them in there," Wicinski said. "You can do that when you are able to execute your base stuff."

The base stuff worked great in the third quarter. Beitzel (6 of 10, 146 yards, 2 touchdowns) tossed a 22-yard touchdown pass to Jack Delabar, who was wide open on a similar play in the first half but didn't get the ball. Ratay added a pair of third quarter touchdown runs, and now has 38 this year (41 total), just 7 shy of the state record.

That was way more than enough the way Geneva's defense dominated. Hofstetter recorded three sacks and had plenty of help from Rich MacDonald (again filling in for Frank Boenzi), Andrew Clausen, Trey Hemming, Trevor Hyslop, Quinn, Bret Shannon, Sean Grady, Michael Santacaterina and almost everyone else.

"You have to win on the road," Hofstetter said. "We knew they were running the ball, and we were lucky because we like stopping the run."

With Ratay running wild, and Geneva's defense stuffing a Rockton team that scored 41 points last week, the Vikings had a formula for not just a playoff win - but a blowout one.