

 Daily Herald

Geneva sacks Rolling Meadows

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One purple Class 7A upset is enough for one weekend.

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A night after Downers Grove North knocked out Wheaton Warrenville South, purple-clad Rolling Meadows had Geneva locked in a scoreless game approaching halftime.

That's when the Vikings and their star back Michael Ratay, finally broke free.

Ratay's 9-yard touchdown run put the Vikings up 7-0 just before halftime. He added two more scores in the second half, giving Geneva a 27-7 victory and a second-round matchup next weekend at No. 9 Rockton Hononegah, a 42-31 winner over Prospect.

Ratay's 3 touchdowns give him 35 rushing and 36 total this year. He carried 31 times for 255 yards.

"I didn't expect such a hard-hitting game," Ratay said.

Or penalty-filled game. Geneva was flagged 16 times for 140 yards, and the Mustangs 6 for 60.

One thing that Geneva (10-0) opponents have come to expect, besides headaches trying to stop Ratay, is how to move the ball against the Vikings' front seven.

Rolling Meadows (5-5) did it on the opening possession, marching 58 yards and eating 6:23 off the clock before Bret Shannon and Trey Hemming teamed for a sack on fourth down.

The Mustangs didn't get another first down the rest of the first half.

"They were tough at the beginning," Geneva defensive lineman Andrew Clausen said. "We got our game plan together and made some hits and sacks."

Seven sacks total, even with 290-pound defensive tackle Frank Boenzi (ill, questionable for round two) on the sidelines. Rich MacDonald started in Boenzi's place and made several big hits while constantly getting into the Mustangs' backfield.

Shannon also made life hard for Mustangs quarterback Jim Garoppolo with three sacks.

"We miss Frank a lot but we did what we need to do," defensive end Cory Hofstetter said. "(Rich) was all over the place. I was very impressed."

Special teams also played a big factor in the first half. Devin Daily blocked a 25-yard field goal and the Mustangs stopped a fake punt, while Brandon Lee recovered a short kick for Geneva.

"There is very little to attack on," Rolling Meadows coach Doug Millsaps said. "Their front four is really, really good, their linebackers are good. They are active."

The Vikings outscored Rolling Meadows 13-0 in the third quarter to go ahead 20-0 entering the fourth. Ratay scored the first touchdown, then quarterback Brandon Beitzel (9 of 15 for 118 yards and 0 interceptions) hit

Jason Holmes from 22 yards out.

"I thought our offensive line played a little better in the second half," Geneva coach Rob Wicinski said. "(Defensively) we made a couple adjustments and I'm proud of the way they didn't panic and stayed on course."

Wide receiver Mick Viken led the Mustangs with 6 catches for 91 yards. His 10-yard touchdown reception in the fourth quarter put Rolling Meadows on the board.

The Mustangs' senior class didn't win a game as freshmen or sophomores. They capped their careers by winning their final three regular season games to run Rolling Meadows' playoff streak to six years.

"When you take a group like that and make the playoffs, that is pretty special," Millsaps said. "I am really proud of them they continued the streak. These guys didn't let the program or community down."