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## Grady shifts momentum

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GENEVA – Sean Grady’s been playing football since fifth grade.

But he’s never done this.

And certainly not twice.

The Geneva senior defensive back scored the game’s first points with his first career interception return for a touchdown, then gave an encore performance to cap the scoring with a second interception runback Friday as the Vikings blasted Tri-Cities rival St. Charles East, 34-7.

“It’s awesome,” Grady said. “It’s a dream come true.”



The Saints (1-1) had the momentum early, and were a few steps away from getting the game’s first touchdown, but senior tailback Wes Allen’s would-be 28-yard touchdown run ended in a fumble just shy of the end zone. Geneva’s Philip Birschbach recovered the ball in the end zone for a touchback.

The team’s then traded punts before Grady’s heroics changed the complexion of the game. On the first play of the second quarter, Grady intercepted a pass from East quarterback Tim Russell and ran it back 77 yards for the score.

The play seemed to energize the Geneva sideline, which added another score before the half on a one-yard plunge from Michael Ratay, set up by a Michael Santacaterina interception at the East 27-yard line.

“That was a big momentum shift from Sean Grady on that first interception,” Ratay said. “That was huge. Our defense, we always feed off them. After that, we just started pounding away.”

Ratay ended the first quarter with just 13 rushing yards, but finished with 139 yards and three touchdowns on 28 carries.

Russell, meanwhile, after a strong debut last week against Batavia, opened with a pair of completions against the Vikings. But it went downhill from there, ending with a third pick with 24 seconds left in the game that Grady returned 99 yards for his second score.

“He got a little bit zeroed in on one guy,” East coach Ted Monken said. “A good quarterback’s got to see that, assess that and throw to the other side. Don’t try to force it in there if you don’t have to.”

After opening strong and seeing Allen pile up 78 of his 121 yards on the ground in the first quarter, Monken felt like, despite the final score, it was a big game that slipped away.

“For the most part, I felt like we gave the game away,” Monken said. “We had an opportunity to take momentum early, and we kind of gave it away. Their defense is tough as nails, but we had them on the ropes a little bit early on.”

But Geneva (2-0), as has become its custom, bounced back and grew tougher as the game wore on.

“I’m really proud of the kids the way they handled that first quarter and kept their composure and poise,” Geneva coach Rob Wicinski said. “That’s a good sign for this group.”

# COMMENTS

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