

 Daily Herald

# Mud suits Geneva just fine

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Muddy turf? Advantage Michael Ratay and the Geneva Vikings.

That's all one needs to know about Geneva's 47-14 victory over visiting Batavia on Friday night in the mud swamp known as Burgess Field.

Ratay blazed an incredible trail of 353 yards on 18 carries, and scored six touchdowns in helping the Vikings finish the season undefeated at 9-0. It all left Geneva coach Rob Wicinski, after becoming the first coach in school history to win five straight conference titles, saying, "He's a special player, and I am blessed to have him."

A quarter-by-quarter look reveals the damage that Ratay and his offensive line inflicted in this contest between the top two teams in the Western Sun Conference.

## First quarter

With the game starting nearly an hour late because of lightning delays, Ratay gave a preview of what was to come on the first snap of the game. He busted off tackle and cut toward an opening in Batavia's defense, and benefited from a big block by fullback Drew Fagot, who sealed a linebacker at the last second. Ratay did the rest, galloping 86 yards for the game's first score - with only 17 seconds ticked off the game clock.

The Viking defense took it from there. With a strong front-four push and linebackers taking turns blitzing, Batavia quarterback Jordan Coffey had a pass picked off by Michael Santacaterina on the Bulldogs' first possession.

Ratay carried the ball six times on the next series, but Geneva quarterback Brandon Beitzel also completed a third-and-15 pass to Charlie James to set up Ratay's 5-yard touchdown run.

A few minutes later, Ratay took off on a 41-yard touchdown run, even though Batavia was starting to stack defenders on the line in hopes of containing the Viking senior.

Score: Geneva 21, Batavia 0.

## Second quarter

Ratay passed the 200-yard mark in rushing on the second play of the quarter, scoring from 18 yards out after finding a hole on the right side behind the blocking of Anthony Strauss, Bryse Biel, John McNeil, Anthony Miller and tight end Harrison May.

Batavia's frustration mounts when a drive inside the Geneva 25-yard line is derailed when a high snap over Coffey's head results in a 17-yard loss and delay of game penalty follows.

When Batavia linebacker Piotri Koczmaro recovers his first of two fumbles on the night, the Bulldogs can't take advantage. The rout is on after Viking defensive back Alex Olenik cuts in front of Bulldog receiver Erich Zeddies to pick off a Coffey pass and race 67 yards for a score.

Coffey and the Bulldogs refuse to give up, marching 67 yards in six plays to finally break into the scoring column when Zeddies gets behind three Viking defensive backs to pull in a 33-yard touchdown pass.

Unfortunately for Batavia, Ratay still had time to get his hands on the ball, and proceeded to notch his most impressive sequence of the night by taking the handoff, getting pounded by a Batavia defender, bouncing free and racing 29 yards for another touchdown.

"I don't know what it is about the mud, but I always play my best games on a field like this," Ratay says afterward.

Score: Geneva 41, Batavia 7.

### Third quarter

With field conditions getting worse, it was becoming apparent that a Batavia comeback was not in the cards. Bulldog halfback J.R. Kabba tried desperately to get around end or through any hole he could find in Geneva's defense, but defensive end Cory Hofstetter and middle linebacker Brennan Quinn were quick to corral him.

Even when Batavia drove to the Geneva 1-yard line, the Vikings were able to hold and took over on downs.

And it again set up Ratay for a sparkling 83-yard scamper down the sidelines before he was dragged down at the Batavia 5-yard line. Two plays later, he scored his final touchdown of the night from three yards out.

The score initiated a running clock because of the 40-point lead and finished Ratay's night with the six touchdowns.

Score: Geneva 47, Batavia 7.

### Fourth quarter

Despite the lopsided score, Batavia continues to attack through the air, with a superb diving catch by Zeddies at the Geneva 2-yard line setting up Kabba's 2-yard scoring run with just over 10 minutes remaining.

From that point, it was time for clean uniforms to enter the contest as both benches were cleared.

Illustrating Geneva's effectiveness on this night, the Vikings boot their first punt with 3:37 left in the game.

"We were very, very focused on this game," Wicinski said. "It didn't matter what the weather was, we just felt very confident coming and felt we matched up well and that good things were going to happen tonight."

Final: Geneva 47, Batavia 14.