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## Sad ending, but much to build on

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CHAMPAIGN - Cory Hofstetter couldn't fight it. He openly admitted he was crying after the Geneva football team lost to East St. Louis 33-14 for the Class 7A state title in Saturday.

"Three years on varsity, it went so fast," Hofstetter said. "I'll never have another high school game. I'll admit it, I was extremely sad out there."

Other teammates may not have cried but still found it tough to smile. Sure, the Vikings realize what they did this season was amazing, but in the end, they did not do what they came to do at Memorial Stadium on the University of Illinois campus.

"We wanted to bring something home," senior Andrew Clausen said.

The Vikings didn't exactly leave empty-handed. They got a second-place trophy and refused to let one loss sum up their season.

"We can't be disappointed at all," senior Trey Hemming said. "I formed a brotherhood with these guys. It's almost like my own family. I love these guys and the coaches with all my heart. I know we are going to stay close."

"No one came to Champaign to lose," senior Anthony Miller added. "We worked hard. We didn't come here to be runner-up. Right now, this is high school kids' lives."

As tough as the loss was on the Vikings and Miller, in the end, he said the season was "like a dream."

"Sometimes you feel like, 'Is this really happening?'" Miller said.

Getting to state was no dream. The Vikings did their best not to look ahead during the playoffs, yet didn't want to just settle for being at state once they got there. They had the ultimate goal to win the whole thing and came into the game unbeaten at 13-0.

The Vikings, however, experienced an unfamiliar feeling - losing. Worst of all, they fell to the same East St. Louis team that issued them their only loss of the season last year in the state quarterfinal round.

Whether they planned to or not, this group of Vikings have officially set the standard for the program. When they were growing up, they watched the Vikings go from a losing team to a playoff qualifier. They were the ones who made Geneva an established conference powerhouse and state contender.

"They put a new meaning on Geneva football," Vikings coach Rob Wicinski said. "The way they handled themselves off the football field, and to have the ability to play football like they did, is nothing but a positive for the program."

There were many young Viking fans in the crowd this season who watched and want to be just like them. Who knows? Maybe they will be someday.

"We pulled into a rest stop on the way here and about 8-10 of those little rug rats got out (of the bus) with their Geneva jerseys on and started throwing the football around," Wicinski said. "I hope all of them are All-

Americans (someday)."

The sophomores who tagged along to Champaign probably learned a thing or too as well and want to get back here on their own. Who knows? Maybe they will.

"They know what they have to do," Hemming said. "We have a lot of athletes on the lower levels that can take advantage of what we paved out. I know they can do it."

Chances are, this group will be in the stands cheering them on.

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