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Schwab: Vikings' D an incredible bunch



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GENEVA – Take a close-up look at the St. Charles East offensive line, and those guys easily could pass for a Division II or D-III college unit.

The Saints are mammoth up front, featuring four starting linemen who weigh 270 pounds or more. And they're not flabby-looking fellas.

If that's a little scary, then this is truly frightening: by the second half of East's game with Geneva on Friday, it was the Saints' linemen who were worn-down, not the other way around.

That's powerful evidence that this Geneva defense is an incredible bunch.

"We just kept pounding and tired them out," Geneva linebacker Bret Shannon said.

The Saints will be in good company on that front. If brawny East had difficulty dealing with Geneva's defense, it doesn't take much imagination to foresee a string of overmatched opponents between now and Week 2 or Week 3 of the playoffs.

"Those linebackers and that defensive front are probably as good as I've ever seen in high school," East coach Ted Monken said.

Initially, the Saints' O-line gave Geneva the same treatment it gave Batavia during an impressive 32-21 win to open the season. But a flurry of Saints turnovers undermined the handiwork, and East couldn't sustain the push.

"They really came out and fired that first quarter," Geneva coach Rob Wicinski said of the Saints. "I'm really proud of the kids. They took a punch in the face."

Standout Saints running back Wes Allen knows how to capitalize on a successful line, but the holes were plugged after halftime. When there was a bit of daylight, Allen didn't have the same burst he displayed early.

"He got winded," Geneva defensive lineman Andrew Clausen said. "He got hit a couple times and he shut down. I just think our defensive line is really going to impress some people."

That was common knowledge long before Friday, just like it was anticipated that the Brennan Quinn-led linebacking corps would hammer away.

The most pleasant development for Geneva was strong signs that the secondary – thought to be the defense's weak link, relatively speaking – can hold up its end of the bargain, too.

Central to that statement was senior Sean Grady, who revved up the packed crowd with a pair of long interception returns for touchdowns.

"He's a big factor to our defense, as well," Clausen said of Grady. "He knows how to play football. He's a smart kid. That's what we need out of our defensive backs."

The game would have been much closer if the Saints had been even average in the red zone.

But the bottom line was Geneva 34, St. Charles East 7. Considering the Saints likely will be the toughest foe Geneva sees all regular season, suspicions that this Vikings team will be off-the-charts-good now are confirmed.

Armed with their first constructive game film of the season – the opener against Dundee-Crown was a laugh – you can expect the Vikings' defense will only improve from here. It had no sacks Friday, a stat that will prove an anomaly, and Geneva allowed the Saints' many more scoring opportunities than will be the norm once conference play begins.

"We get a little uptight with that, too, but you can't ask for anything more," Wicinski said. "They are high school kids."

High school kids who can stare down a college-sized offensive line, and be the ones to hand out the punishment.

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COMMENTS

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