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## Vikings rely on strength

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GENEVA – It wasn't quite a scare.

But when Sycamore's Marckie Hayes returned the opening kickoff of the second half to tie Friday night's game at Geneva, the Vikings knew what they had to do.

The Vikings started playing the power game, dominating on both lines and slowly wearing down a Spartans team that put up a fight for just more than three quarters but eventually had too much in a 45-21, homecoming win to keep Geneva (5-0, 3-0 Western Sun Conference) undefeated.

"[The kickoff return] hurt, but I knew that we were going to come back from that," Geneva defensive lineman Cory Hofstetter said. "Our defense hadn't been on the field and our offense was moving the ball amazingly well."

In such a high-scoring game, it's hard to credit the defense. But the Vikings defense made the halftime adjustments necessary to hold the Sycamore (3-2, 1-2 WSC) offense scoreless after intermission, which was the key to winning the game.

The Vikings cut off the lanes for the Spartans' speedy running backs and harrassed quarterback Michael Buckner while avoiding giving up the big plays that hurt them in the first half.

"I think part of it was that we were a step slow," Geneva coach Rob Wicinski said. "We made a couple of adjustments with the safeties and linebackers to try to close off the AB gap and, once they get in a passing situation that works for us."

On offense, the Vikings focused on giving fullback Drew Fagot the ball in the first half before focusing on getting Michael Ratay the ball in the second half.

Fagot finished with 91 yards on 14 carries with a touchdown while Ratay ran for 176 yards and a pair of touchdowns with 111 of those yards coming after intermission as the Spartans defense wore down.

"I ride the horse in the fourth quarter," Wicinski said. "It depends on the situation, but that's the perfect scenario."

Wicinski called a short pass that turned into an 18-yard gain to help quarterback Brandon Beitzel's confidence early after a three-interception performance a week ago against Glenbard South.

Then he went on to throw 8-for-14 for 95 yards with a pair of touchdown passes, one to Jason Holmes and the other to Brandon Lee on an 28-yard pass that Lee tipped twice before hauling in to put the game out of reach.

"The kid has been throwing great, but it's just confidence and getting the wideouts where they're supposed to be," Wicinski said about Beitzel.

Michael Santacaterina had a long punt return, which set up his own 13-yard touchdown run for the Vikings' last touchdown of the game.

## COMMENTS

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