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## Geneva cruises into matchup at WW South

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Tarps covered the Burgess Field turf for the past few days in hopes that the Geneva Vikings' football field wouldn't be a quagmire for the Class 7A opening round playoff game against Shepard on Saturday afternoon.

One would be delusional to think it would transform the soggy gridiron into a fast track.

But it was fine with Geneva. Not so fine for the Shepard Astros.

Behind a stonewall defense and three touchdown passes by quarterback Brandon Beitzel, the Vikings vaulted into the second round by bombing Shepard 38-6.

"It was really tough conditions and it just doesn't end, kind of like Groundhog Day," Geneva coach Rob Wicinski said. "The players didn't complain, but I haven't seen a full-speed cut in about six weeks, even in practice."

The Vikings didn't need full-speed cuts to find the soft spot in a Shepard defense that was stacked in tight to stop the run.

"They were stacking eight or nine guys in the box, and whenever they have that many, we are going to throw and we were having great success and stayed with it," said Beitzel, who overcame a slow start to throw two of his scoring passes in the first half - both to wide open receivers.

The first was a 23-yard pitch to tight end Jack Delabar, who went right down the middle of the field without a defender within 10 yards, late in the first quarter. The second came on an 18-yard toss to fullback Connor Quinn off play-action in the left flat just two minutes into the second half.

Geneva's defense wasn't allowing Shepard to move the ball, especially on the ground, where the Astros went to the lockerroom at halftime down 14-0 with minus-4 yards rushing.

"You always want to take away the run," said Frank Boenzi, the Vikings' standout 300-pound defensive lineman. "If you can make the other team have to pass, you are in good shape."

Geneva (9-1) wasn't steamrolling the Astros on the ground either, but Michael Santacaterina did break away early in the third quarter for an 18-yard touchdown run.

The Vikings recovered a fumble and recorded two interceptions and eight sacks in the game, which dismantled any offensive plan Shepard (7-3) had in mind. But the key defensive play came midway through the third quarter.

Shepard backup quarterback Tom Larson was pressed into action when starter Dontae McCoy injured his leg. But Larson slipped to a knee in the end zone for a Geneva safety and a 22-0 lead.

On the ensuing kickoff from the Shepard 20-yard line, Jacob Landau raced 65 yards for a touchdown and a 29-0 lead that wiped out any hopes Shepard had of making it an interesting contest.

"It was a really nice, returnable ball," Landau said. "I saw the seam that my blockers created and you could

have driven a truck through it."

Beitzel (10 of 18 for 137 yards) put the finishing touches on the rout by finding wide receiver Matt Williams in stride for a 46-yard touchdown reception late in the third quarter.

Shepard finally broke into the scoring column when Larson found 6-foot-5 senior wide receiver DeMarkus Lucas for a 17-yard touchdown pass with just over three minutes left in the game.

"Whatever our team brings to the game - good, bad or indifferent - we have really been liking the angles out of our defense and their positioning and staying low," Wicinski said.

"They are going to have to have some pretty good angles next week," Wicinski said, referring to his team's second-round matchup at the home of powerhouse Wheaton Warrenville South.

"This is a lot of fun for the kids," Wicinski said. "They have earned the right to go to the next level, and it is very cool."