



Geneva gets back on track with win over Kaneland

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With a second chance to stick with Michael Santacaterina Friday night, that's just what Geneva coach Rob Wicinski did.

Santacaterina scored his fourth touchdown of the night in overtime, giving the Vikings a 27-24 victory at Kaneland in a wildly entertaining back and forth game that pitted the Knights' air assault against Geneva's power ground game.

The win keeps Geneva (7-1, 5-1) tied with Glenbard South, a 49-34 victor at Rochelle, for the Western Sun lead heading into next week's regular season finale at Batavia.

The Knights (5-3, 4-2) saw their title hopes dashed but not without putting up an outstanding fight.

"We knew it would be a last-second play and I thought we had a last-second play down the stretch and I blew up on the pass," Wicinski said. "I was really bummed about that. But they showed some nice composure."

Wicinski was referring to Geneva's last drive in regulation, when the Vikings drove to Kaneland's 15 with the score tied at 21. Geneva had been 1 for 11 on third-down conversions before the drive started, then converted three straight on a run by Santacaterina and two Brandon Beitzel to Charlie James completions.

At the 15 and in James' field goal range, Geneva opted for a pass, and back-to-back sacks by Jimmy Boyle and Taylor Andrews on second down and Brock Dyer on third down forced a Geneva punt and sent the game into overtime.

Kaneland had the ball first and stalled at Geneva's 6, settling for Kevin Szakowski's 23-yard field goal and a 24-21 lead.

"We tried plays we had success with and unfortunately they didn't work," Kaneland coach Tom Fedderly said. "Just credit them (Geneva). They did a good job on defense. We just came up a little short."

Santacaterina gained 8 yards on Geneva's first play of overtime, then two more on the next handoff for the winning score.

"I told the line in the huddle I'd see them in the end zone," Santacaterina said. "We knew we were getting in. It was all the O-line on the last drive. They pushed them about five yards back those last two plays."

Santacaterina ran for 124 yards, more than half of Geneva's 238 total offense. He scored on runs of 7, 1, 6 and 2 yards.

"He's great to block for," Geneva senior lineman Matthew Spinghorn said. "He's not one of those guys that run from side to side. He goes straight in there."

Kaneland outgained Geneva 276-238, though only 10 of those yards came on the ground and once overtime started the short field didn't help its passing game.

"Overtime it is nice to get the field squeezed a little so they aren't running free," Wicinski said. "I think that

helped our defense a little."

As hard as both teams went at each other, both also had individuals turn in superstar performances. While Santacaterina was busy breaking down Kaneland on offense, Vikings linebacker Connor Quinn was all over the field, batting down pass after pass and constantly pressuring Camiliere, along with Andrew Mariotti, Frank Boenzi and company.

Kaneland countered with the Joe Camiliere to Ryley Bailey show. Camiliere threw for 235 yards, 3 touchdowns and 0 interceptions, while Bailey caught 13 passes for 173 yards and a score.

"We knew if we got him (Camiliere) a little time we could get things going," Fedderly said. "Give them credit, they got some pressure on him. But Joe took some big strides today stepping up and throwing the ball."

Both defenses started the game with a sack, Quinn for Geneva and then Callaghan for the Knights. The defenses continued to control most of the first half. Even when the Knights fumbled a punt, recovered by Geneva's John Yelle, Kaneland held at its own 18, helped by a dropped pass in the end zone on fourth down.

Tied 7-7 at halftime, the offenses took their turn in the spotlight in the second half. Geneva took the opening kickoff 62 yards for a 14-7 lead, with Santacaterina carrying the final six plays.

Kaneland came back with Andrews catching his second touchdown pass from Camiliere after Bailey moved the ball down the field with 4 receptions on the drive.

Kaneland took a 21-14 lead in the fourth quarter on a 9-play, 82-yard march. Camiliere kept it alive with a 29-yard scramble on 3rd-and-20, then found Bailey for a 13-yard TD pass with 10:22 remaining.

That lead lasted less than three minutes before Santacaterina scored, a touchdown set up by his 28-yard run on a fake punt.

"We knew we weren't going to be stopped," Santacaterina said.