

By JON STYF - Shaw Suburban Media

Geneva holds off Sycamore

SYCAMORE – Michael Santacaterina had seen the play before.

And the Geneva senior defensive back was just waiting for Sycamore's Marckie Hayes to cut on the passing route. As the Vikings' defensive line converged on Sycamore quarterback Trevor Mathey and forced him to throw, Santacaterina dove into the passing lane and snagged away the ball and Sycamore's final chance to score as he helped seal the Vikings 28-20 win Friday night at Sycamore's Engh Field.

"He's got great instincts," Geneva coach Rob Wicinski said. "That was a great break. Your best player has got to make big plays in big games like that."

Santacaterina made plays in the secondary all night, but he also made a difference on offense, rushing 12 times for 45 yards and a pair of touchdowns.

Things weren't all peachy for the Vikings (5-0, 3-0 Western Sun), however, as they fell down 20-14 early in the second half.

Each time Sycamore (3-2, 1-2 WSC) scored though, the Vikings had an answer.

It was either fullback Connor Quinn (109 yards on 19 carries), quarterback Brandon Beitzel (11-for-15 for 145 yards) or wide receiver Charlie James (five catches for 75 yards, two touchdowns) there to make a play.

Geneva's late comeback, the second in the past two weeks, was spurred by Santacaterina's two turnovers and plenty of big running plays up the middle.

"We've been in that situation before," Santacaterina said. "We've always been a second-half team and we're able to come out and make the adjustments necessary."

On the final drive, it was a surprise pass to Quinn that sealed things. On a third-and-4, Beitzel dropped back and found Quinn near the left sideline for the Vikings' final first down (No. 23) of the night.

"Beitzel did a great job of game management and getting the ball to the fullback," Wicinski said. "We checked them and a lot of those plays that was Beitzel. I think, with the offensive line, we're going to see some good things on film."

Running back Jay Graffagna finished with 79 yards on 13 carries. James made the most eye-opening play of the game in the third quarter when he used his body to shield the ball from Sycamore defensive back Danny Schroeder and catch a 31-yard touchdown.

James then made all four of his extra-point kicks.

Copyright © 2009 The Chronicle. All rights reserved.