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## Geneva reloads after magical '08 season

By Dave Oberhelman | Daily Herald Staff

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Geneva's Rob Wicinski knows it's a prep football coach's lot to mold a new cast every season.

"It's the same-old, same-old. You try to get back to work and put it all together," he said.

He certainly did in 2008, leading the Vikings to the Class 7A championship game, their state runner-up finish matching a 1975 finish in 3A.

From several standouts including all-staters and respective Western Sun Conference defensive and offensive MVPs Cory Hofstetter and Michael Ratay - the latter ran for 44 touchdowns and 2,859 yards to place himself among the IHSA's all-time best in both - Geneva returns only one offensive starter.

He's a good one. Strong-armed quarterback Brandon Beitzel completed 108 of 194 passes for 1,541 yards and 12 touchdowns last season to draw interest from about 15 college programs, Wicinski said.

"He does a nice job of commanding the offense, of managing things," Wicinski said.

Aside from Beitzel, much work awaits offensively. Tailback Jay Graffagna and fullback Connor Quinn - younger brother of graduated two-time all-area linebacker Brennan Quinn - return a whole 167 yards and 3 touchdowns running the football.

Receivers Charlie James, Jake Landau and tight end Jack Delabar are basically in the same boat, and the Vikings must retool their entire offensive line though the good news is it's a senior-laden group.

Geneva can afford to let its offense develop. Back are big guns from a 4-3 defense that last year held opponents to the county's third-lowest number of yards per game (253.1).

The biggest, literally, is 6-foot-3, 300-pound tackle Frank Boenzi. While he's strong as an ox he's quick on his feet and has a great attitude. A minimum of 50 schools have expressed interest in Boenzi for football, Wicinski said, including Ohio State, Arizona, Boston College and Colorado.

"He's very agile and he gets off the ball," Wicinski said. "You get a kid like that, that's gold."

"Big Frank" will be ably assisted by two more college prospects, nice-sized linebacker Bret Shannon and defensive back Mike Santacaterina, who's been talking to Western Michigan among others. Newcomers like junior lineman Andrew Mariotti are fast learners.

The Vikings, joining the Upstate Eight Conference next season along with Batavia, have held at least a share of the Western Sun title in each of its three seasons, winning it outright and unbeaten the past two years.

Wicinski said mirroring all the achievements of the 2008 squad "would probably take a herculean effort," but the preseason atmosphere reflected a program now in a state of perpetual reload.

"It's actually been absolutely awesome," Wicinski said. "We always have the same goals and the same expectations."