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# Geneva's 'D' does it in win over St. Charles East

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That old saying about offense putting fans in the seats and defense winning championships only proved somewhat true in the season opener for Geneva and St. Charles East Friday night at Norris Stadium.

While neither the Vikings or Saints could muster much offense, the stands were still packed on both sides.

So maybe fans come out to see great defenses too. There were two of them on the field Friday, with the Vikings making one last stand in the final minute for a 13-6 victory.

"It was a good defensive battle, real physical upfront," Geneva safety Michael Santacaterina said. "The line got after it real well."

Geneva (1-0) was especially dominant in the first half, sacking Nolan Possley 5 times. Senior stalwarts Frank Boenzi and Bret Shannon both had 2 sacks and both recovered a fumble.

The Vikings led 13-0 at halftime, then held on down the stretch to leave St. Charles feeling like they won without playing their best game.

"Coming over here I was pumped, I'm excited we got our first win," Boenzi said. "We've got a lot to work on but what team doesn't?"

St. Charles East (0-1) made it a 13-6 game on Matthew Payne's 25-yard touchdown run in the third quarter. The Saints got the ball back five times after that with a chance to tie but never got inside the Geneva 31.

On their last chance, St. Charles East took over in great field position at the Geneva 42 with 2:16 remaining. The Saints, who completed just 2 passes in the game, tried three runs before a halfback option pass that came up a yard short on fourth down.

"The offense will come," said Mike Fields after his first game as Saints coach. "We'll fix it. Once we get those things squared up we're going to be that much better. It's a nine-week season. We're just starting off."

Geneva set the tone on the opening series with a 3-and-out on a series that lost 6 yards.

The Vikings also didn't move the ball much early. They got on the board after Jack Delabar's 46-yard punt pinned the Saints at their 4.

Boenzi recovered a fumbled snap, giving Geneva 1st and goal at the 5. Quarterback Brandon Beitzel's 7-yard pass to Connor Quinn gave Geneva a 6-0 lead.

The Vikings made it 13-0 on another 7-yard Beitzel TD toss, this one to Delabar with 10:50 left in the second quarter. A 43-yard run by Jay Graffagna (89 yards, 18 carries) set up the score.

That was it for Geneva offensively. The Vikings finished with just 8 first downs, a 31-yard pass on a fake punt from Delabar to Jacob Landau the offensive highlight over the final 35 minutes.

"We have growing pains," Geneva coach Rob Wicinski said. "We have to go back to work. Our offensive line, they creased us with some basic blitzes. It's something we knew we were going to struggle with and we

just have to find our right personnel and get them in the right spots."

Beitzel finished 5 of 13 for 40 yards and 2 touchdowns. Saints corner back Tyler Nutting, who also had a busy night returning punts, intercepted him twice, and Bryce Barry had an interception on a Hail Mary to end the first half.

"Whatever works," Beitzel said. "Our defense really did the job. The whole offense is meshing. First-game jitters, you get it out. The next game will be better."

Payne ran for 69 yards on 10 carries for the Saints and Corey Campbell added 49 yards.

"They really pushed our buttons, they found out what was working and they kept doing it the whole game," Beitzel said. "We were basically playing ourselves. They have a bunch of talented kids."