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## Geneva's strong start continues

GENEVA – Replacing the lion's share of its talent from last year's Class 7A state runner-up, conventional wisdom suggested the Geneva football team would be slow out of the gate this season.

Just two weeks into the season, the Vikings don't look too far off their old championship form. Geneva gave an impressive performance Friday, controlling highly touted Morgan Park of the Chicago Public League, 31-20, to start the season 2-0.

Geneva coach Rob Wicinski was delighted with his team's improvement after the Vikings scored only 13 points in a sometimes-sluggish opening win at St. Charles East last week.

"The consistency with the offense I was very pleased with considering last week I just couldn't get anything together," Wicinski said. "I was pleased with them bouncing back after our first week. I think we're going to see some noticeable improvement on film."

The Vikings' defense also did its part. The secondary of Nolan Block, Michael Santacaterina, Jacob Landau and Ryan Landrum was especially impressive, keeping a Morgan Park passing attack that took numerous shots deep downfield frustrated most of the night.

"We've got a lot of speed on our defense and coach prepared us real well for that deep passing attack that they had," Block said. "It all just comes back to our practice and preparation for this game."

Block started the night on an excellent note, intercepting quarterback DaRon Brown on the game's opening possession and returning the ball to Morgan Park's 11 yard-line.

"Our line put the pressure on him, he had to force that throw, and I was right there," Block said.

Two Santacaterina runs later and Geneva was in the end zone. The Vikings kept the lead the entire night, stretching it to 17-6 by halftime after another Santacaterina rushing touchdown and a 29-yard Charlie James field goal.

Although the game never turned into a blowout, Geneva virtually cemented its win with a smooth drive to start the second half. Occasionally mixing in a hurry-up offense, a rarity for Geneva, the Vikings drove 73 yards in about 5 minutes, capping the drive with a 1-yard TD run from Santacaterina to go up 24-6.

Morgan Park responded early in the fourth quarter with a touchdown and two-point conversion to come within 24-14, but another effective sequence by quarterback Brandon Beitzel and the offense resulted in Geneva's final touchdown, a 24-yard scamper by Jay Graffagna (19 rushes, 81 yards) with 8:24 to go.

That drive was prolonged when Beitzel hooked up with sophomore receiver Matt Williams on third-and-8 for an 11-yard reception. Williams also had a 36-yard reception in the first half, while Beitzel was 13-of-16 for 190 yards with no interceptions in arguably his sharpest outing for the Vikings.

"The sophomore boy is coming along," Wicinski said of Williams. "He's still a sophomore but he's coming along. That was good to see him make those strides."

"Beitzel's just got to step up and throw, and that's what he did. Get rid of the clutter and just step up and throw. We try to give him some nice targets, and he was able to execute."

Geneva now prepares to open Western Sun Conference play next week against Yorkville after a convincing win in what figured to be the Vikings' toughest home test of the season.

The new-look Vikings are looking like another winner.

"I didn't know where these kids were at mentally and physically," Wicinski said. "If Morgan Park would have came in here and creased us for four touchdowns it wouldn't have surprised me, and this doesn't really surprise me either. It's kind of a goofy bunch right now."

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