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James nails game-winner to seal comeback

GLEN ELLYN – Discussions of Geneva's abundance of offensive weaponry over the years seldom merit mention of its kicker.

Alex Pokorny and Shaun Ratay guided the ball through the air and Michael Ratay ran with it. The guy who booted point-afters was window dressing for the box score.

Enter Charlie James, a wide receiver by size, number and trade, who just happens to kick off and kick field goals. With 7:14 to play Friday, he sent his biggest yet hurtling through the uprights, a 30-yard that sealed the Vikings' wild, 26-24 victory against Glenbard South.

"This is huge," James said. "This is awesome. This is the Western Sun Conference right here, I think."

Hold the phone on that one. Like the rest of its league brethren, Geneva (4-0, 2-0 WSC) has five conference games remaining in its quest for the final WSC title. Glenbard South (2-2, 1-1), which entered the fall as a potential heir to the Vikings' throne, built a case and an early lead but still stumbled down the stretch.

Then again, Geneva had something to do with that, too. A defense that yielded 362 total yards by halftime – 351 involving Raiders quarterback Trace Wanless alone – enjoyed arguably its finest 24 minutes of the young season.

With standout senior defensive tackle Frank Boenzi sidelined by a one-game suspension stemming from an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty in Week 3, the Vikings produced two second-half feats that at first seemed unthinkable. They forced a Glenbard South punt and sacked the elusive Wanless twice, rallying from a 24-17 deficit at intermission to win their 22nd successive regular-season game.

"You know what, we had to," senior defensive back Nolan Block said. "We felt embarrassed after that first half. We didn't show up at all, so we had to come out and make a statement."

Geneva moved the ball with nearly as much ease as Glenbard South in the early going, collecting 291 yards before halftime. Junior Connor Quinn, who finished with 152 rushing yards and a touchdown, led the way, carrying his heaviest load yet.

Senior back Jay Graffagna rattled off a 40-yard run in the second quarter and classmate Michael Santacaterina added two goal-line scoring plunges, but Quinn's star turn at fullback especially kept the Raiders guessing.

Vikings coach Rob Wicinski lauded quarterback Brandon Beitzel's checkdowns and a steadying offensive line that often produced big holes for Quinn.

"I'm incredibly proud of these guys tonight," Wicinski said. "This is how you want to do it right here."

James, who added four receptions for 55 yards, displayed what Block labeled a "big boot" with Geneva trailing, 24-23 midway through the fourth. His 39-yarder with 6:46 to play in the second drew the Vikings to within 18-17 as the Raiders started to sweat two missed PATs and two failed conversion attempts in the first half.

"They both felt really good," James said, "like they definitely had the distance.

"Now we're going to ride this for awhile."

GENEVA 26, GLENBARD SOUTH 24

Geneva	7	10	6	3	–	26
G. South	12	12	0	0	–	24

First quarter

GS – Douglas 59 pass from Wanless (kick failed), 3:57

G – Quinn 16 run (James kick), 2:26

GS – Wanless 80 run (run failed), 2:13

Second quarter

G – Santacaterina 1 run (James kick), 11:18

GS – Wanless 2 run (kick failed), 8:58

G – James 39 field goal, 6:46

GS – Slezak 4 run (pass failed), 0:25

Third quarter

G – Santacaterina 2 run (kick blocked), 8:36

Fourth quarter

G – James 30 FG, 7:14

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING – Geneva: Quinn 15-152, Graffagna 8-64, Santacaterina 15-35, Beitzel 7-(minus 3). Totals: 45-248. Glenbard

South: Wanless 13-119, Douglas 2-11, Hentges 4-5, Slezak 1-4. Totals: 20-139

PASSING – Geneva: Beitzel 14-24-172-0-0. Glenbard South: Wanless 19-26-295-1-0.

RECEIVING – Geneva: Williams 3-62, James 4-55, Campbell 2-40, Santacaterina 2-11, Landau 2-9, Graffagna 1-(minus 3).

Glenbard South: Rovanseck 7-161, Slezak 7-77, Douglas 4-57, Teitsma 1-3, Hentges 1-(minus 3).

TOTAL YARDS: Glenbard South 434, Geneva 420.

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