




## Second-half turnaround spurs Geneva girls basketball past St. Charles East

By KEVIN DRULEY - [kdruley@shawmedia.com](mailto:kdruley@shawmedia.com)  
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ST. CHARLES – Halftime speeches in the Geneva girls basketball locker room include the usual encouragement when the Vikings are ahead.

If they trail, the message grows more stirring. It usually spikes in volume, too.

Neither coach Sarah Meadows nor her players remembered verbatim what was exchanged during intermission of Tuesday's Upstate Eight Conference River Division game at St. Charles East. After the Vikings turned a three-point halftime deficit into a 60-45 win, it was apparent they got the gist of Meadows' message.

"She's very blunt, and she said, 'You guys aren't playing how I know you guys can play. You guys can play harder,'" Geneva junior post Sami Pawlak said. "After that, we really wanted to win. We knew that we could, and after just hearing that from her we were like, we really need to pick it up. We don't want to let anyone down."

Geneva (7-0, 2-0 UEC River) struggled to find its rhythm early as the Saints (4-4, 2-1) challenged their shots and drives to the basket.

Even after failing to convert a handful of mid-range jumpers and layups approaching halftime, East found itself with a 25-22 lead at the break.

The Saints excelled in slowing the Vikings' vaunted pace, often finding Paige Jordan beyond the arc or on the wing for quick moves to the basket.

Still, just as swiftly, the Vikings erupted for a 23-8 run in the third quarter. The Saints worked to cut into Geneva's double-digit lead but could not channel what gave them their own halftime advantage.

"We were ecstatic, and we knew we had to come out because we knew they were going to turn it up a notch [after halftime]," said Jordan, a junior guard. "We just should have come out a little bit more pumped."

Jordan wondered aloud after the game whether the Vikings scored each of their points via layups. It was close, but not quite so. Geneva collected 10 free throws while sophomore Morgan Seberger swished a pair of three-pointers.

Apart from that, though, most Geneva scoring plays started and ended with fluidity and relative ease.

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St. Charles East's Kyra Washington (right) and Geneva's Stevie Fanale (right) battle for a rebound during the Vikings' 60-45 victory over the Saints on Tuesday in St. Charles. (Photo by Jeff Krage – For the Kane County Chronicle)  
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Saints coach Lori Drumtra knew her team grew frazzled as it was forced to play at Geneva's pace. East was within a basket of the Vikings with just less than six minutes left in the third quarter before the visitors' pressure took hold.

Ashley Santos leapt to tip and control a Saints' inbound pass and swung the ball to sophomore Michaela Loebel, who found Pawlak running down the right wing for a layup.

Now that's what Meadows was talking about.

"What we're really good at is pushing the ball forward. We like to surprise teams by inbounding really fast and just shocking them with a quick play," Loebel said. "We're not one of those teams that runs an offense a lot."

Four Vikings finished in double figures, as Pawlak led the way with a double-double of 18 points and 14 rebounds. Loebel and Santos finished with 11 points and eight rebounds apiece, while Seberger chipped in 10 points.

Jordan led all scorers with 23 points, starting her night with the Marquette-bound Santos guarding her. Jordan got the better of her former Illinois Attack teammate early, though Santos and the Vikings turned up the intensity – and collected several blocked shots – after halftime.

Familiarity went Geneva's way elsewhere in the backcourt, as Loebel limited Saints sophomore Amanda Hilton to a field goal and three free throws. Loebel and Hilton visited for a few minutes after the game, and why not? Both players have been Attack teammates and also are part of the same Strikers Fox Valley soccer team.

Morgan Vyzral (nine points) and freshman Kyra Washington (seven points, eight rebounds) served as East's other options on a night the Saints were content with playing in the 40s. The Vikings? Not so much.

"You should have come and seen me at halftime," Drumtra grinned after the game. "I was a lot happier person at halftime."

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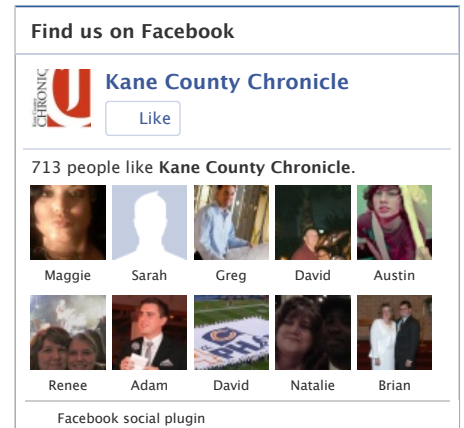


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