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Batavia senior Austin Lewis (right), who recovered two fumbles in Saturday's 42-0 win against host Lakes in a 6A quarterfinal, is congratulated by teammate Dom Guzaldo (left).

Batavia football crushes Lakes in 6A quarterfinal

By JAY SCHWAB
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LAKE VILLA – Batavia football coach Dennis Piron did his best machine gun impression describing the flow of Bulldogs defenders to the ball on Saturday night, saying guys were lining up Lakes ball-carriers "boom-boom-boom-boom-boom-boom."

"It's fun when you see that level of hitting and that level of football," Piron said.

The Bulldogs are having fun, alright. And in Saturday's 42-0, Class 6A quarterfinal pounding against the host Eagles, it was a joyride from the get-go.

"We were a little tired of coming out slow and putting up bad numbers in the first half," Batavia receiver Evan Zeddies said, referring to slow starts in the team's first two postseason victories. "We wanted to come out and make a statement."

The Bulldogs (12-0) advance to host Prairie Ridge (11-1) in a 1 p.m. state semifinal on Saturday in Batavia. That one figures to be much more suspenseful than the quarterfinal, in which the Bulldogs delighted a huge traveling turnout by zooming to a 21-0 lead by the end of the opening quarter.

Batavia laid the groundwork for a thrashing less than 90 seconds in, when Cole Gardner blocked a punt deep in Lakes territory and fellow senior Austin Lewis pounced in the end zone for a touchdown. Lewis, who has had a penchant this season for scooping up turnovers, also teamed with Gardner in the third quarter, recovering a fumble after Gardner drilled Lakes quarterback Chris Hoffman.

"I've had a couple of games like that," Lewis said. " ... I guess I'm good at finding the ball when it's on the ground."

Batavia scored again on a four-yard touchdown run by fullback Alec Lyons with 3:59 left in the first quarter. Then, another anemic Lakes possession gave the Bulldogs the ball at Lakes' 40-yard line with the wind still at their backs.

A pass interference call and two Noel Gaspari completions – the second a 16-yard touchdown pass to tight end Cole Gardner – made it 21-0, visitors, with 2:08 to go in the opening quarter.

"You can't spot a 12-0 football team 21 points. ... It's the quarterfinals," Lakes coach Luke Mertens said. "That stuff is unacceptable."

The Eagles' offense is heavily reliant on junior running back Direll Clark, who managed 113 yards on 25 carries against a formidable defense focused squarely on his whereabouts. But the Eagles turned it over three times and had little to complement Clark.

"That Direll kid, he's a [heck] of an athlete," Lewis said. "He was a great running back, probably the best we've seen all year. But we made plays when it mattered, they turned the ball over and gave our offense [scoring opportunities]."

Batavia settled for a 21-0 halftime lead largely because of a bizarre officiating sequence late in the second quarter.

A pass interference penalty on Lakes appeared to give the Bulldogs a fresh set of downs, first-and-goal at the Eagles' 3-yard line.

But after one incompletion, the ball was awarded to Lakes (9-3) on a turnover on downs.

LOOKING FORWARD: THE WEEK AHEAD IN CHRONICLE SPORTS

Tuesday

Coverage from the first night of the 2011-12 girls basketball season on Monday night as Rosary takes on crosstown foe Illinois Math and Science Academy.

Other Tri-Cities girls basketball teams will tip off their seasons later in the week, including Batavia opening its season at home on Tuesday night against Glenbard South.

Wednesday

The Chronicle rolls out our 2011 boys soccer all-area package, including player of the year and coach of the year stories.

There are several quality POY candidates around the area, including two on Class 2A powerhouse Marmion – Mike Frasca and Mick Maley. St. Charles North's Tyler Davis and Batavia's Cody Witkowski are among the others in the mix among the area's elite.

Saturday

Log on to **KCChronicle.com/preps** for coverage of the final day of the IHSA Girls Swimming and Diving State Meet and the football state semifinals.

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