

College hockey gameday



Joel Hanson



Brian Kilburg

Minnesota State at Wisconsin

The 13th-ranked Mavericks (15-10-4, 9-9-4 in WCHA) will hit the road for the first time in three weeks when they take on the No. 10 Badgers (13-11-6, 9-9-4). The two teams are tied for fourth place in the WCHA standings. During a December meeting in Mankato, the Mavericks defeated the Badgers 3-1 and followed that with a 1-1 overtime tie. Minnesota State is 4-1-1 in its last six games against Wisconsin.

The 5-hole

Five things to know about this weekend's games:

1. On the road again: The Mavericks haven't played outside of Mankato since Jan. 26 at St. Cloud and haven't gone on an overnighiter since Jan. 11-12 at Duluth. The Mavericks are 6-7-2 on the road, including a 3-2-1 mark in the last six games. "I'm a lot more concerned about Wisconsin than I am about the road," coach Troy Jutting said. "The road's not going to be our opponent."

2. Feeling hot, hot, hot: Minnesota State has won six games in a row, but its been performing at a good clip over the last 2½ months. Since tying Minnesota Duluth 2-2 on Nov. 30, the Mavericks are 12-4-2 and have gone from last place in the WCHA to fourth. Senior captain Joel Hanson (7-12-19) has averaged a point per game and leading scorer Trevor Bruess (7-18-25) has 18 points over that span.

3. Let's get physical: The Mavericks' big hitters have come out over the last six games. Forwards Geoff Irwin (7-8-15) and Jason Wiley (9-4-13) had some highlight checks against St. Cloud State, and defenseman Brian Kilburg (3-7-10) wowed the Alltel Center crowd against Denver and Alaska-Anchorage. Kilburg, a junior, has moved into a tie for 12th place on MSU's career penalty minutes with 199.

4. Fabulous freshmen: Wisconsin is led in scoring by one of the top rookies in college hockey, Kyle Turriss (11-18-29), who was the third overall pick in last summer's NHL draft. Turriss ranks second in scoring among WCHA freshmen. Teammate Patrick Johnson (6-12-18) is fourth, followed immediately by Minnesota State's top newcomer, Andrew Sackrison (4-12-16).

5. Scouting the Badgers: Coach Mike Eaves' Badgers have lost just one of their last nine games. Junior forward Ben Street (12-14-26) is the Badgers' top goal scorer, while sophomore Blake Geoffrion (8-16-24) rounds out Wisconsin's No. 1 line with Turriss and Johnson. Junior goaltender Shane Connelly (.917, 2.30) has played in 27 games this year and is 1-1-1 against MSU for his career.

Around the rinks

Minnesota State women at Ohio State: The Mavericks (10-17-1, 9-14-1 in WCHA) will attempt to win five, possibly six, games in a row when they travel to Columbus, Ohio, to take on the Buckeyes. More importantly, MSU wants to remain ahead of Ohio State (12-15-3, 7-14-3) in the conference standings. The Mavericks are two points ahead of the Buckeyes with four games remaining.

This weekend's series

7:07 p.m.
today and
8:07 p.m.
Saturday
Kohl Center,
Madison,
Wis.
Radio: KTOE
1420 AM
TV: FSN
North-
Wisconsin