



Sports

Relay of MSU hurlers stifle Bethany

Six Mavericks combine for three-hit, 6-1 win

By Denny Weller
Special to The Free Press

MANKATO — The Minnesota State baseball team showed off its pitching wealth Monday night at Franklin Rogers Park while notching a 6-1 non-conference win over Bethany Lutheran College.

Senior right-hander Lee Hodges set the tone for the Mavericks, working a perfect three innings before watching five teammates close out a three-hitter.

Two of the Vikings' hits were a lost-in-the-lights single from Pete Harstad and a ninth-inning infield single from Justin Schwecke.

"Bethany has a pretty decent program so I approached it like any other game," Hodges, a Blue Earth Area graduate, said. "I did my thing, got ready mentally and had a good time out there. My curve ball really worked well tonight and I was hitting my spots with my fast-ball."

After Hodges struck out two in using

just 34 pitches to get through his stint, Bethany scored the game's first run in the top of the fourth inning off winning pitcher Danny Klous (8-1). Junior center fielder Alex Smith lined a single into right-center field and eventually scored on a two-out, two-base throwing error.

Minnesota State (41-8) took the lead for good in its half of the fourth when Josh Simon belted a home run over the flag pole in right-center field and, one



Minnesota State pitcher Lee Hodges (left) pitched three perfect innings Monday in a regular-season ending game against Bethany Lutheran. Pete Harstad (right) had one of Bethany's three hits.

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out later, Kyle Hoover sent a towering shot just over the left-field fence. The Mavericks made it 3-1 an inning later when Kosoke Hattori singled and Simon ripped a run-scoring double into the left-center field gap.

"For the most part our pitchers threw strikes, but offensively we were a little overmatched," Vikings' coach Ryan Kragh said. "They're ranked in the top 10 in the country but I liked the way we competed and I think our program is heading in the right direction"

The Mavericks, who are two wins away from tying last year's school record of 42 victories, added three runs in the sixth frame behind two walks, a hit batter, an error and Hattori's RBI single up the middle. Hattori, a sophomore second baseman from

Kanagawa, Japan, and Simon had two hits apiece for the winners. MSU collected just seven hits off eight Bethany pitchers.

"We're used to facing a little faster pitching so it was quite an adjustment for us," said Minnesota State coach Dean Bowyer, who was celebrating his birthday. "But that's the name of the game, you have to make adjustments."

Minnesota State got three strikeouts in two innings from Chris Odegaard and Patrick Lenton fanned the side in the final inning.

Both teams are in action Thursday. Bethany (20-17) opens play in the Upper Midwest Athletic Conference Tournament in Duluth against Minnesota-Morris while the Mavericks begin play in the North Central Conference Tournament in St. Cloud at 6 p.m.