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for Cavaliers**



Minnesota State baseball preview

Play (snow)ball

Mavericks warm to the start of a new season

By Brian Ojanpa
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MANKATO — Sub-zero cold, snow as high as a small dog's eye?

No matter. The Minnesota State Mavericks will be playing in-state baseball on Friday.

"This is the earliest we've ever played, but it's a veteran ballclub, so I thought we could do it," says Mavericks head coach Dean Bowyer, whose squad set a single-season school record with 43 wins last year.

MSU will play a doubleheader with the University of Mary on Friday in the Metrodome, even though the squad has barely begun to work out its off-season kinks.

The Mavericks return 16 letterwinners from a 2006 squad that won the North Central Conference title and came within a whisker of making its first national tournament appearance since 1986.

MSU advanced to the regional finals before losing to Emporia (Kan.) State.



John Cross

Indoor workouts are prepping the Minnesota State baseball team for ... some indoor baseball. The Mavericks open their season Friday in the Metrodome with a doubleheader against the University of Mary.

That outcome wasn't surprising, given that northern-tier teams rarely crash the national tourney party dominated by Southern programs.

"Obviously, it was a big disappointment. You always want to end on a high note,"

MSU pitcher Dane Secott says. "In the grand scheme of things, we didn't accomplish all the goals we set out to ... but it brought us back on the baseball map."

On the basis of MSU's near-miss in 2006, outfielder

Adam Sudbeck gives short shrift to geographic hindrances.

"A Northern team going to the College World Series is definitely doable if you have the drive and determination, which we do. We've had a

taste of the regional, and now we want to take it one step higher."

Key returnees for MSU include top-of-the-rotation righthander Secott, who was

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8-1 with a 3.66 ERA in 2006, and Sudbeck, who hit .359, with team highs in homers (15) and RBIs (58).

The Mavericks will be strong up the middle with senior catcher Pat Ottum (.351), senior shortstop Scott Kemp (.302), senior second baseman Nick Gonzalez (.319, 32 RBIs) and speedy newcomer Zac Danelson, a junior transfer from Lewis & Clark State.

Question marks will be third base, with the departure of Ryan Greene (.328, 11 homers, 56 RBIs), and pitching.

Bowyer says Secott and Jon Bjelland (6-1, 2.86 ERA) will likely be joined in the starting rotation by Danny Klous, a transfer from South Dakota State, and Pat Criss,

a transfer from Division I University of Texas-Corpus Christi.

"In straight numbers of arms, we're down this year, but we're up in talent considerably," Secott says. "And we have top-tier quality experience here. I think we'll be as good as anyone in the region."

The bullpen will be anchored by junior closer Nick Fellman, who led the nation in saves with 18 last year and was a second team All-America selection.

The squad also has an international flavor with freshman second baseman Kosuke Hattori from Japan.

MSU will play games in Missouri, Georgia and Texas in February and March. Its first home game is scheduled for April 6 with Minnesota Duluth.