Mavericks 75, St. Cloud State 67

Minnesota State University’s Harry Boyce (23) provided some quality minutes off the bench Saturday in a Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference win against St. Cloud State.

On the line

Charity stripe proficiency helps Mavs top St. Cloud State

By Chad Courrier
Free Press Staff Writer

MANKATO — Last season, free throws were a problem for the Minnesota State men’s basketball team, which shot only 71.8 percent at the stripe.

This season, the Mavericks are shooting 76.6 percent from the line, which ranks sixth in Division II, but the free throws were never more important than they were Saturday.

“Last year, when we stepped to the line, we were hoping to get one of two,” junior guard Jesse Clark said. “That sounds horrible, but now we feel like we’re going to get two every time, and that’s what you need at crunch time.”

MSU women clinch share of NSIC title

By Chad Courrier
Free Press Staff Writer

MANKATO — Winning the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference championship isn’t the Minnesota State women’s basketball team’s top goal, but it’s the first step in what they hope will be a historic season.

“Every day, the girls look up at that banner (at Bresnan Arena listing conference championships),” coach Pam Gohl said. “We’ve talked about it all year, it’s been our goal. It’s next to do that.”

The Mavericks withstood a late rally from St. Cloud State to post a 78-65 victory Saturday, and with Winona State’s victory over Augustana, Minnesota State clinched at least a share of the Northern Sun championship. It’s the second conference championship in program history, joining the 1985-86 team that won the North Central Conference title.

“When we came here as freshmen...
MEN: Nelson paces Mavericks with 20

Continued from Page C1

The Mavericks were 29 of 37 from the line and scored 18 of the final 20 points from the line in a 75-67 victory over St. Cloud State in a Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference game at Bresnan Arena. It was a physical, close game reminiscent of many North Central Conference battles between these teams, and the outcome was in doubt until the Mavericks made 18 of 20 free throws in the final 7:16.

“We’ve really been shooting free throws well,” coach Matt Margenthaler said. “We’re fortunate to have big men who can shoot the free throws so I was confident with Travis (Nelson) at the line. If you take care of the basketball and get to the line, you’re going to win a lot of basketball games.”

The Mavericks got up early, leading 16-8 after six minutes, with Harry Boyce providing the spark with a basket and two assists, but Minnesota State scored just six points in a 10-minute stretch that allowed St. Cloud State to go ahead 25-22.

Minnesota State pulled within 33-31, but the Huskies’ Brett Putz nailed a halfcourt shot at the buzzer for a five-point lead.

Minnesota State’s shooting percentage gradually decreased as the half went along, ending at 39.4 percent, and St. Cloud State, which shot 50.0 percent, was plus-five in rebounding.

“We struggled in the first half again, but we talked (at halftime) about having fun and enjoying it,” Clark said. “Sometimes, we get caught up in what we’re not doing and get frustrated. We just need to play.”

The Huskies built a nine-point lead in the first four minutes of the second half, but Clark sparked a Mavericks’ rally with a three-point play and two assists to Boyce for layups as the game was tied at 48 at the 13-minute mark. Mitch Gosson’s layup put the Mavericks up two, and after Gosson hit again from close, the lead was 55-48.

St. Cloud State went back ahead at 57-56 with 6:30 to go, but Nelson, an 83.3 percent shooter, made 8 of 8 free throws, while Morrow, an 80.0 percent shooter, and Clark, a 82.8 percent shooter, were both 4 of 4 as the Mavericks pulled away.

“Everybody on the team can shoot free throws,” Clark said. “It’s contagious. When someone misses, everyone misses, but when someone makes, everyone makes.”

Nelson finished with 20 points, including 12 of 14 free throws, and Clark had 15 points, hitting 7 of 7 at the line. Gosson had 11 points, nine rebounds and three blocks, and Boyce scored 10 points.

“Harry was outstanding,” Margenthaler said. “He gave us energy on the defensive end and created a lot of havoc for their guards. And he got the basket.”

The Mavericks shot only 39.0 percent from the field and were 0 for 6 from 3-point range, ending a streak of 577 consecutive games with at least one. The last time the Mavericks didn’t make a 3-pointer was Jan. 13, 1989.

But Minnesota State made 13 more free throws than the Huskies, who shot just 27.6 percent in the second half, and committed only four turnovers.

WOMEN: Held off Huskies late-game charge

Continued from Page C1

men, nobody really thought we’d do anything,” senior Heather Johnson said. “Now, we’re building the program, and a conference championship is amazing.”

An early 12-point run, keyed by four points apiece from Alex Andrews and Joanne Noreen, allowed the Mavericks to open a 21-8 lead with 11:26 remaining in the first half. After the Huskies hit a 3-pointer, Minnesota State put together another seven-point blitz as Tiffany Moe hit a long 3-pointer.

Liz Trauger’s 3-pointer at the four-minute mark put Minnesota State up 39-19, and the deficit remained at 19 points at halftime. The Mavericks shot 51.7 percent from the field and made 13 of 14 free throws. Johnson, Noreen and Trauger each had 10 points at the break.

“We were hitting open shots, and these are the best passers I’ve ever coached,” Golli said. “When it got down to the end of the shot clock, we made the plays. It’s a lot of fun.”

The lead grew to 23 points early in the second half, but the Huskies reeled off 12 straight before Flecia Foster scored on the break. St. Cloud State got within seven points before Foster nailed a corner 3-pointer and Trauger scored from the lane giving the Mavericks a 12-point lead with four minutes to play.

The Huskies had a late charge to pull within five, but Andrews scored from the lane and Noreen made two free throws, securing the noteworthy victory.

“I think we got a little tired, and we missed some shots,” Johnson said. “But everybody stepped up when we needed to and did what we had to win.”

Trauger finished with 17 points and seven rebounds, and Noreen had 18 points, seven rebounds, four assists and three steals. Johnson scored 15 points, making three 3-pointers. Minnesota State shot only 35.5 percent in the second half but made 16 of 17 free throws in the game.