



MINNESOTA STATE 25, AUGUSTANA 17



Pat Christman

Minnesota State's John Koons (top) works on a reversal en route to the second-period pin during Friday's match against Augustana at Bresnan Arena.

184-pound spark plug

Koons on nine-match winning streak for Mavericks

By Chad Courrier
Free Press Staff Writer

MANKATO — John Koons is traditionally a slow starter, not wrestling his best until after January. This season, Koons has celebrated the new year with a dominant stretch of wrestling, knocking off several ranked wrestlers during a nine-match winning streak.

"I don't like losing, hate it," he said.

Koons and teammate Travis Krinkie rescued Minnesota State from a lackluster start with a pair of pins Friday as the second-ranked Mavericks defeated No. 5 Augustana 25-17 in a North Central Conference match.

"It was extremely frustrating," Minnesota State coach Jim Makovsky said. "Our whole mission tonight was to wrestle a good team with a lot of emotion and a lot of intensity.

"The first five matches, we were flat-footed and straight-legged. If not for Koons and Krinkie turning things around, who knows?"

After receiving an opening forfeit at 125 pounds, Jeff Pfaffinger won a major decision at 133 to put the Mavericks up 10-0.

But Augustana won three of the next four matches, with the three victories all coming on late points, to close within 13-9.

It took Krinkie, the second-ranked wrestler at 174, just 2:17 to pin fifth-ranked Dusty Wilking, and Koons, a senior 184-pounder, followed with a pin in 3:28 against Nate Buys. Koons was ready for a cradle, which Buys tried. When the two met a couple of years ago and earlier this season, Buys got the cradle, and Koons answered with a reversal. This time, Koons got the pin.

"I guess the third time's a charm," Koons said.

Since the Mavericks began the dual meet season, Koons — the current NCC wrestler of the week — has been dominant, outscoring nine opponents by a combined score of 98-6 with a pin, three technical falls and four major decisions.

"He's feeling it," Makovsky said. "He's always saying winning is a habit, and he's on a good roll right now. He's been our spark plug."

Last season, despite battling a hernia, Koons advanced to the national tournament, but he lost his first two matches.

He's using that as motivation as he continues to pound his opponents with a motto of "be physical, be mean, score points."

"Anything less than a national title will be disappointing," Koons said.

The Mavericks (10-1) will have another home dual on Friday against Minnesota State-Moorhead.

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125—Nick Smith (MSU) wins by forfeit; 128—Jeff Pfaffinger (MSU) major dec. Jeremiah Degen, 18-5; 141—Andre VanDerKoope (A) dec. Zach Stevens, 6-5; 149—Ryan King (A) dec. Brandon Gitz, 6-2; 157—Mathias Bliz (MSU) dec. Aaron Haddock 11-4; 165—Cody Henriksen (A) dec. Andy Piskac, 5-4; 174—Travis Krinkie (MSU) pins Dusty Wilking, 2:17; 184—John Koons (MSU) pins Nate Buys, 3:28; 197—Tim Smith (A) tech. Milten Jurke, 2-0; 7:00; HWY—Chris Gatz (A) dec. Tim Kramer, 9-5.