

MINNESOTA STATE 36, ST. JOHN'S 6



Pat Christian

Minnesota State's Efrain Ayala tries to bring St. John's University's Cory Seehan to the mat during their match Wednesday at Bresnan Arena.

Mavericks slam St. John's

MSU's Rhoten picks up first home win in more than a year and a half

By Jim Rueda
Free Press Sports Editor

MANKATO — There's good, and then there's pretty darn good.

The Minnesota State University wrestling team was not on top of its game Wednesday night at Bresnan Arena, but still walked away with a 36-6 victory over nonconference foe St. John's. That MSU, ranked third in Division II, could deliver a lopsided win without competing at its best is an indication of just how talented the 2006-07 Mavericks truly are.

"I'd say, if you were to give us a grade tonight, I'd go with a B or a B-minus," MSU coach Jim Makovsky said. "We could have done better as a team but there were some encouraging bright spots for us."

"Cory Harnitz and Jason Rhoten and Efrain Ayala all wrestled well

after coming back from injuries last season. And (our freshman heavy-weight) Brady Wilson looked pretty good in his first home dual meet, too."

St. John's got on the scoreboard first Wednesday. Mogi Baatar upset Division II's second-ranked Nick Smith 5-4 at 125 pounds.

That proved to be the Johnnies' only lead of the night as MSU reeled off five straight wins to take a commanding 21-3 lead. A pin by seventh-ranked Efrain Ayala at 141 pounds and a technical fall by third-ranked Rhoten at 149 keyed the rally.

Ayala is recovering from a torn ACL and Rhoten's win was his first for the Mavericks in front of the home crowd in more than a year and half. He missed all of the 2005-2006 season with a broken leg.

Brandon Girtz also had a nice win

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125 Mogi Baatar (StJ) dec. Nick Smith 5-4; 133 Jeff Pfaffinger (MSU) dec. Tim Thompson 8-6 (OT); 141 Efrain Ayala (MSU) pinned Cory Seehan 4:45; 149 Jason Rhoten (MSU) technical fall over Zach Anderson 22:4 (15:20); 157 Brandon Girtz (MSU) dec. Jacob Malone 8-6; 165 Tim Matheson (MSU) maj. dec. Eric O'Brien 16-2; 174 Grant Eustice (StJ) dec. Jeremiah Nowak 6-2; 184 Travis Krinkle (MSU) technical fall over Drew Gideman 22:4 (2:16); 187 Cory Harnitz (MSU) maj. dec. Jason Finley 17-4; HWT Brady Wilson (MSU) pinned Jacob Everson 40.

for the Mavericks at 157, earning a 9-6 decision over Division III's fourth-ranked Jacob Malone.

"Girtz wrestled well, that was a pretty tough kid he was going up against," Makovsky said.

Girtz was a little tougher on himself than his coach. "I didn't wrestle as well as I could have," he said. "I should have finished off more of my shots. I don't think it was anything he was doing, I just should have wrestled better."

St. John's stopped the MSU run at 174 pounds when St. John's Grant Eustice defeated Jeremiah Nowak 5-3.

MSU then closed out with three impressive victories. Third-ranked Travis Krinkle engineered a 20-4

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technical fall in just 2:16 at 174 pounds, Harnitz major decisioned Jason Finley 17-4 at 197 and Wilson pinned Jacob Everson in 40 seconds at heavyweight.

Although Harnitz, a Mankato native and graduate of Lake Crystal-Wellcome Memorial High School, is in his third year at MSU he's still considered a freshman. Wednesday was the first home dual meet of his career.

He redshirted his first year and then suffered a shoulder injury which required surgery his second year and was granted another medical redshirt season.

"It's been a long time coming," Harnitz said. "It feels good to finally get out there in front of the home crowd."

"My shoulder feels great. Physically I think I'm ready but getting back into it mentally is the tough part. I'm not used to staying focused for seven minutes like you

have to in college wrestling."

The Mavericks (1-0) are back in action this weekend at the Nebraska-Omaha Open. They do not have a home meet again until Feb. 9, when they host UNO at Taylor Center.