



Sports

MSU football candidates are good — but none better than Mussman

Back in 2002, Chris Mussman thought he had a good chance to be the next football coach at Minnesota State, replacing Dan Runkle, who had brought Mussman to Mankato as an assistant in 1991.

Mussman would have been a good choice, having worked here for eight seasons, then had four seasons at North Dakota to learn how one of the best Division II pro-

grams operates.

But he was wrongly passed over.



CHAD COURRIER
The Free Press

A month ago, it looked like Mussman again had a good chance to be the next football coach at Minnesota State, replacing Jeff Jamrog. He would have been an even better choice now as he had more experience, and having recruited this area for most

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of his career, he had the contacts to support his knowledge and abilities.

But this time, he passed on Minnesota State.

Mussman, the assistant head coach and offensive coordinator for the Sioux, was promoted to head coach last week after Dale Lennon took a job at Southern Illinois. Some people who are close to Mussman said it was a tougher choice than it might appear.

However, it was an opportunity too good to turn down, though there will be tough times ahead as the program transitions to Division I. But the pay was likely far more, the university has a proud tradition, and as North Dakota State has shown, the rewards of even moderate success can be sweet.

As Minnesota State pares its list of potential coaches down to a handful for on-campus visits next week, there again are plenty of good candidates. According to several sources, Jerry Olszewski, a former coach at Minnesota State and defensive coordinator at Wisconsin-Stevens Point, was among the candidates interviewed by phone this

week.

Greg Etter, the defensive coordinator at Carthage College who played here in the mid-1980s, has been interviewed, as has South Dakota offensive coordinator John Hoffner. Others apparently still being pursued by Minnesota State are Dan McLaughlin, coach at Wayne State who was the Mavericks offensive coordinator in 2004; Jeff Tesch, coach at Bemidji State; Curt Wiese, an alum who is the coach at Marietta College; Jim Williams, offensive coordinator at Illinois State; and Lance Leipold, coach at Wisconsin-Whitewater, which just won the Division III championship.

A few of these candidates will be on campus next week, and shortly thereafter, Minnesota State will hire the 13th head coach in program history. Each of these candidates have strengths, each has weaknesses.

But Mussman would have, and should have, been at the top of the list.

Again, North Dakota beat Minnesota State in football.

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