



Sports

MSU football job is going to be a tough sell

When Dan Runkle left Minnesota State after the 2001 season, university officials trumpeted the football coaching position as a great opportunity, a gem of a job, certain to



CHAD COURRIER
The Free Press

attract an impressive sets of candidates. And it did. A major Division II job in one of the best conferences in the country, located near a metro area teeming with talent, at a large university with more-than-adequate resources, with remodeled facilities and a

Please see COURRIER, Page D4

COURRIER: Reduction in scholarships not an inviting situation for a new coach

Continued from Page D1

plan to upgrade the stadium ... OK, it's a great opportunity.

But as athletic director Kevin Buisman prepares for his second football-coaching search in four seasons, not all of those things remain true.

Jeff Jamrog resigning this week and returning to his alma mater Nebraska is not a shocking move, considering the position he'll take over and the pay raise he'll surely receive. But while it was predictable, it's also another major step backward for this program, which has taken its share of hits in the last decade and is hardly thriving.

When Runkle left, the Mavericks were on a run of seven straight losing seasons. Clarence Holley didn't end that streak, and the Mavericks went 0-11 in 2003. When Holley resigned in mid-summer of 2004, the Mavericks surprisingly landed Jamrog — with his ties to Nebraska — and enthusiasm for the program was never higher than when his team went 6-5 that first season.

But since then, the team has gone 11-22 and won just 5 of 20 conference games. The North Central Conference has crumbled, and the university decided that the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference was its best option for the future, but that league has no such stature in football and can't compete at the national level. Buisman said he's looking for a new coach who is

loyal and committed to a long-term stay at Minnesota State, but do you really want someone who's satisfied with winning conference championships?

Will a coach who dreams of leading his team to national championships see that the Northern Sun scholarship limits make that extremely unlikely and stay away from Minnesota State?

The strengths of the program are the university's size and location. The remodeled locker room, coaches office, training room and weight room are still a nice draw, but the stadium upgrades seemed to be on hold, doomed by a student referendum last spring.

Holley was told that stadium upgrades were in the

works seven years ago, and the only changes that have been made is that big lump of grass outside the southeast end zone.

It's no longer a plum job, capable of attracting the best candidates, who once hired will have the task of overcoming another diminished season of recruiting. The program will be gutted by the scholarship reductions necessary to move into the Northern Sun, and one of the new coach's first tasks will be to cut the money already promised to players here on campus, which could lead to the defection of the top players. If no players leave, there can't be much left in the scholarship budget for the upcoming recruiting class. Can't imagine too many

coaching hopefuls who would relish that responsibility.

Will potential candidates see the turnover here in staff — two head coaches and several assistants in the last six seasons — and figure something's wrong here?

It would seem that the job of replacing the football coach

at Minnesota State has gotten a lot tougher since 2001 now that the program has less to sell.

Chad Courrier is a Free Press staff writer. To contact him, call (507) 344-6353 or e-mail at ccourrier@mankatofreepress.com.

25% Nicks for the Whole Family!

- 25% OFF Mens & Womens APPAREL
- 20% OFF Large Selection of DUFFELS
- 20% OFF Mens, Womens, Queens & Kids SUCKS
- 20% OFF HOCKEY EQUIPMENT (INCLUDES STICKS)
- 20% OFF UNDERWEAR
- 20% OFF ALL SHOES

NICKLASSON ATHLETIC
"Look Great, Play Great!"
107 S. Browne • Mpls. • Tel: 612-344-6888
Nicklasson Athletic will give you more! Mon. 9-6, Tues.-Fri. 9-5, Sat. 9-4
\$20 for every \$100 you spend! WWW.NICKLASSONATHLETIC.COM

Mens, Womens & Kids
• Mens • Womens • Adults
• Socks • Socks
• New Balance