



Minnesota State sophomore Andy Schoonover gives the football team more physical play and depth at offensive line.

Guard's return a bonus for MSU

Injury forces Schoonover to miss '06 season

By Chad Courrier
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MANKATO — Andy Schoonover's sophomore season lasted one week, when during a practice drill, one of the defensive linemen stepped on his ankle. The 6-foot-4, 315-pound guard didn't think it was serious at the time, but as the season approached, the injury lingered, and he couldn't play.

"I didn't think I'd be out (all season)," Schoonover said. "It was hard, all the work you do in the winter and summer and then you can't be out there with your buddies, that was frustrating."

Schoonover has made it through Minnesota State's spring football practices, which ended Saturday with a short scrimmage at Blakeslee Stadium in front of a couple hundred fans, and he's gaining confidence that he can hold up next season.

"I'm cautious," he said. "It's taken me a while to get going. I've been out of (action) since August."

The Mavericks struggled on the offensive line, with injuries and inexperience leading to inconsistent play.

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Photos by Pat Christman

Minnesota State offensive line coach Michael Cunningham gets his squad, including Mankato East grad Brad Diel (90), ready for a play in Saturday's final spring practice at Blakeslee Stadium.

MSU: Diel switches to offense

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The pass protection improved as the season went along, but the Mavericks rarely generated any rushing game, averaging just 56.9 yards per game and 2.7 yards per carry.

"I think we were too one-dimensional," coach Jeff Jamrog said. "We had a much more physical spring, and I think that helped on both sides of the football."

This spring, Jamrog said he wanted to find the five best linemen, match them into the proper positions and develop some depth. In the starting unit, Adrian Battles returns at left tackle, and Jake Droessler is moving from guard to center. Schoonover is back at guard, with redshirt freshmen Mike Ziedler (guard) and Jeremy Clark (tackle) fill out the lineup.

To improve the depth, former Mankato East standout Brad Diel has moved from defensive tackle to offensive tackle.

"This is the most athletic, physical line we've had since I've been here," Jamrog said.

The key might be keeping Schoonover on the field. He started a couple of games as a true freshman, and Jamrog said many times last season that Schoonover would have been his best lineman.

"He has toughness, he has that lunch-pail mentality that you know you're going to get a



Minnesota State football coach Jeff Jamrog talks with cornerback Kelvin Rodgers after Rodgers caught a touchdown pass as a receiver in the final practice of the spring Saturday at Blakeslee Stadium.

tremendous work day out of him every time," Jamrog said. "He's respected by his teammates and the coaches, he's a nice guy. But there's some nastiness to him on the field."

Schoonover was one of several players who didn't participate in the scrimmage portion of Saturday's practice. Naggling injuries forced Jamrog to schedule a shorter final workout, but he was pleased that the team met its

three goals for the spring: improve each day, develop as many starters as possible and get more focused about football.

"I think the mental aspect of the game is something that improved, offensively and defensively," he said. "We're a smarter team compared to last season. The injuries were a problem, but I'd rather have them now than have them in the fall."