

MINNESOTA STATE 23, CENTRAL MISSOURI 14



Photos by Pat Christman

Minnesota State receiver Chris Nowlin loses the ball after colliding with Central Missouri's Adrian Chapman during the first half Thursday.

Mavericks win opener

Tompkins boots go-ahead field goal; King passes for 408 yards

By Chad Courrier
 Free Press Staff Writer

MANKATO — A year ago, Jason Tompkins was slated to be the Minnesota State kicker, but an ankle injury sidelined him for the season. On Thursday, he was listed as a backup on the Mavericks' depth chart.

But with 2:26 to play in the season-opening nonconference game against Central Missouri, Tompkins made the biggest field goal of his Minnesota State career, a 39-yarder that sparked his team's 23-14 victory.

"I was totally confident and relaxed," Tompkins said.



Jason Tompkins

Tompkins, who was 4 of 8 on field goals during his junior season, was kicking off a slick turf in high grass, and coach Jeff Jamrog said he was calling a fake field goal. But after a timeout, Jamrog — who chose Tompkins as a starter over incumbent Ben Spencer just before the game — decided to give his senior kicker a chance.

"For once in my life, somebody was able to talk me out of trying a fake," Jamrog said. "The players said give him a chance. If you're going to have one of those special seasons, you're seniors have to step up, and they did tonight."

Central Missouri — which owned six-minute advantage in time of possession in the first quarter courtesy



Minnesota State's Donte Shackelford has a deep pass knocked away from him by Central Missouri's Bruce Williams on the first play of the season Thursday at Blakeslee Stadium.

On the Web
 To view a photo gallery of Thursday's game, visit www.mankatofreepress.com.

of three interceptions — finally got on the board midway through the second quarter. A nine-play, 62-yard drive ended with a 3-yard pass from Eric Czerniewski to Adam Parks for

a 7-0 lead.

Receiver Donte Shackelford, a junior college transfer from Iowa Central, flashed his speed early, nearly hooking up on a bomb on the Mavericks' first play and then catching a 58-yarder later in the opening quarter. Following an interception by Mike Hinton, the Mavericks faced

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MAVERICKS: King puts game away with late TD pass

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a third-and-3 at the 40 when Ben King found Shackelford, who showed a burst to catch the rainbow over his shoulder just before stepping out of the back of the end zone. Tompkins' PAT tied the game with 4:52 remaining in the first half.

King's fourth interception set up the Mules for a quick score in the third quarter as Czerniewski found Anthony Parks for a 17-yard touchdown and a 14-7 lead.

The Mavericks got even late in the third quarter, starting at their own 5-yard line. Four straight pitches to Tory Chappell moved the ball to the 33, and a short pass to Nick Haley preceded a 55-yard catch and run to Omaar Balton for the tying touchdown.

The Mavericks had a good chance to take the lead early in the fourth quarter but fumbled at the 2-yard



Pat Christman

line. Then Minnesota State took over with 5:30 remaining at their own 25. A couple of short completions set up a 25-yard throw to Shackelford. After a short run, King was sacked to force a third-and-23. King passed 18 yards to Damian Turner, making it fourth-and-5 at the 22.

"I made sure I didn't think about slipping," said Tompkins, who lost

his footing a couple of times during the pregame warmup. "If you think about slipping, you probably will. I just shortened up my steps.

"When they called a fake, I was like 'come on. Let me kick.'"

The Mavericks added a late touchdown on King's second interception pass to Shackelford, this one covering 15 yards.

"I started off making bad deci-

sions, bad throws," King said. "But I knew I had to bounce back. There was a lot of game left. The defense did a great job and kept us in the game."

King finished with 24 completions in 45 attempts for 408 yards, the third-highest total in his career and fourth-best total in program history. He threw three touchdowns and four interceptions.

Shackelford made his Mavericks' debut with six receptions for 161 yards, the ninth-best single-game effort ever at Minnesota State.

"I wasn't thinking about the yardage or the catches," Shackelford said. "I was just thinking, you never know if your next play is going to be your last. It was an adrenaline rush out there, it was a great feeling."

Minnesota State (1-0) plays on the road next week, traveling to Cedar Falls, Iowa, for a Thursday game against Northern Iowa.

Minnesota State summary

Central Missouri	0-7-0-14	
Minnesota State	0-7-9-23	
Second Quarter		
CM—Adam Parks 4 pass from Eric Czerniewski (Maur Velazquez kick), 8:51		
MSU—Donte Shackelford 40 pass from Ben King (Jason Tompkins kick), 4:52		
Third Quarter		
CM—Anthony Parks 17 pass from Czerniewski (Velazquez kick), 11:26		
MSU—Omaar Balton 55 pass from King (Tompkins kick), 1:55		
Fourth Quarter		
MSU—Tompkins 39 field goal, 2:26		
MSU—Shackelford 15 pass from King (kick failed), 1:39		
	CM	MSU
First downs	17	17
Rushing (Att.-yds.)	25-80	21-10
Passing (Com.-att.-int.)	20-39-2	24-45-4
Passing yards	167	408
Total offense (Att.-yds.)	74-267	86-118
Fumbles (No.-yds. lost)	1-1	1-1
Penalties (No.-yds.)	3-15	5-30
Punts (No.-avg.)	6-27.0	6-29.8
Punt returns (No.-yds.)	3-22	2-1
Kick returns (No.-yds.)	5-100	3-67
Possession time	35:42	24:18
Third-down conversions	9/20	5-14
Fourth-down conversions	0-1	0-0
Sacks by (No.-yds. lost)	2-26	1-10
Attendance	4,344	

RUSHING: Central Missouri—Miller 20-82, Czerniewski 8-19, Graham 4-10, Anthony Parks 1-1, Berry 1-(-5), Minnesota State—Chappell 8-27, Phipps 3-(-1), King 6-(-13).
 PASSING: Central Missouri—Czerniewski 20-39-2, 167 yards; Minnesota State—King 24-45-4, 408 yards.
 RECEIVING: Central Missouri—Anthony Parks 5-73, Adam Parks 4-47, Berry 4-20, Thomson 2-15, Mason 2-12, McCartney 2-9, Miller 1-11, Minnesota State—Shackelford 6-161, Haley 5-44, Turner 4-58, Chappell 4-13, Nowlin 2-68, Balton 2-60, Peterson 1-4.
 FIELD GOALS: Central Missouri—Velazquez 0-1, Minnesota State—Tompkins 1-1 (39).