

MSU SPRING FOOTBALL PRACTICE UNDER WAY



John Gross

Senior Tory Chappell (1) is being moved from receiver to tailback during Minnesota State's spring football practice.

Rush week

Mavericks look to improve ground game's meager totals from last season

By Chad Courrier
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MANKATO — In a perfect world, Minnesota State offensive coordinator Dan Ragsdale would love to have two tough tight ends, one on each side of five big, nasty offensive linemen. The bruising fullback would be lined up ahead of a breakaway tailback.

The quarterback would take the snap and hand to the tailback, who would break off a nice gain as his blockers overwhelmed the defense.

However, the Mavericks offense isn't built like that so he's looking for other ways to move the football.

"Our offensive philosophy is to have the best five (skill) players on the field somewhere," Ragsdale said. "Last year, they were receivers. We want to run the ball, but can we run the ball?"

Minnesota State's spring practice period began before the sun came up Friday morning at Myers Field House. One of the positions that could be determined this month is running back, where the Mavericks didn't get much production last season.

The Mavericks averaged just 56.9 yards rushing per game, 2.7 yards per rushing attempt. In 11 games, Minnesota State had just three rush-

ing touchdowns.

"Last year, there were games where we had no chance to run the ball," Ragsdale said. "We're not going to try to do something we can't do."

However, Ragsdale said that the Mavericks are more athletic in the offensive line so there may be more opportunities to run, though it might not be the standard off-tackle or power sweep plays.

"If our best three skill players were running backs, we'd be running the wishbone," Ragsdale said. "But I believe we have the best player in Division II at quarterback (Ben King) so we have to build our offense around him."

The top running back Friday was Tory Chappell, a converted receiver. Last season, the Mavericks moved

Please see MSU, Page D6