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O'Dea scores lone goal
in Crusader loss

Sports

Defense puts on a show vs. Mary

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MANKATO — Zero points allowed, two interceptions, one of which was returned for a touchdown, three sacks and only 183 yards allowed to a team that had been averaging 25.5 points and 265 yards of offense per game.

The Minnesota State defense, which has not drawn the recognition that the offense has over the last three seasons, highlighted Saturday's 40-0 victory over Mary in a Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference football game in front of 1,675 fans at rainy Blakeslee Stadium.

"We want to be known not only as one of the best defense in the conference, but one of the best in the nation," middle linebacker Tony Hunter said. "This is my fourth year, and we've always had great talent, but we never showed it. I'm tired of that."

The Mavericks have posted one shutout in each of the last three seasons, but those came against Peru State (70-0) in 2007 and Upper Iowa in 2006 (38-0)

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and 2005 (38-0). Before that, it was 1992 since the Mavericks had a shutout. Mary hadn't been blanked since the season-opener in 1996.

"We couldn't run on them," Mary coach Myron Schulz said. "Their defensive line was big and strong, big, tough kids. They're fast where they need to be. We haven't been beaten like that in a long time."

Minnesota State gave up 45 yards rushing and 138 yards passing, never allowing Mary to get inside the 25-yard line. Only 22 of Mary's 63 plays started in Mavericks' territory.

Well-traveled St. Mary

Last week, Mary, which is located in Bismarck, N.D., played a game against Upper Iowa at Fayette, Iowa, which is a solid 12-hour bus ride.

This week, the Marauders were back on the bus to Mankato, a 9½-hour ride.

But Schulz didn't blame the travel or the schedule-

maker for Saturday's loss.

"I think we traveled well, we stayed in nice places, we ate well," Schulz said. "I think Minnesota State affected us."

Kicking woes

Last week, the Mavericks had two field goals blocked in a victory over Bemidji State, one which Hoffner said was due to bad alignment and the other because of a low kick.

On Saturday, Spencer Goff had a low PAT kick blocked after the second touchdown, caused by pressure up the middle from 6-foot-5 defensive end Shawn Melland. In the fourth quarter, Grady Derheim missed a 25-yard field goal when a bad snap disrupted the timing, and he didn't hit it cleanly.

"It's nice that we can get a win and work on that problem," coach Todd Hoffner said. "If we don't get it fixed, it's going to bite us in the butt sometime. It should be as easy as the snap from center to quarterback. We have plenty of work to do."

Hoffner said that Spencer Goff and Derheim have a competition each week in

practice to decide who'll be kicking. Goff has been the kicker in the first three games, having made 3 of 5 field goals and 8 of 9 PATs. Derheim has had just the one field goal attempt.

"The competition has been tight so we'll open it back up this week," Hoffner said. "We'll play the best guy."

Southern exposure

The Mavericks play Saturday at Wayne State, the first game of the South Division schedule. All Northern Sun games count toward the league championship, but games against South Division opponents are used to determine the division title.

"We approach every game the same way," quarterback Ryan Fick said. "A win's a win. We don't think ahead, we don't think about the last game."

Wayne State is 2-1 after losing 31-17 at St. Cloud State on Saturday.

"I haven't watched much film on them yet," Hoffner said. "They had a nice run last year, and they've carried that over. It'll be the toughest game we've had so far."