



Sports



Minnesota State's Sean Treasure fumbles the football, which is recovered by Minnesota-Duluth's Matt Hoffman (far left) during Saturday's football game at Blakeslee Stadium.



Pat Christman

Bulldogs down Mavs

Late rally falls short in homecoming loss

By Chad Courier
Free Press Staff Writer

MANKATO — The enthusiasm that was so high just five weeks ago has seemed to disappear. Just having lost for the fifth time in six games, with four of those losses by less than a touchdown, Minnesota State football coach Jeff Jamrog seemed drained Saturday.

"The coaching staff and the players are very disappointed," Jamrog said. "When you lose (close games), there's only one way to go, and that's up."

"There are very few programs that are built, and this program was as low as it was, when good things happen week after week. Last year was a special year, and this year could have been like last year."

Instead, the Mavericks dropped another close game, losing 28-23 to Minnesota-Duluth at Blakeslee Stadium. It was the first North Central Conference road victory for the Bulldogs, who joined the league last year.

"It's tough to get wins on the road in the

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MAVS: Too many mistakes at wrong times

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NCC," Bulldogs coach Kyle Schweigert said. "It's something our program had never done. I was disappointed with how we played in the second half, but we probably played our best half of the season in the first half."

As has been the case most of the season, the Mavericks made several big plays, looking at times like an inspired team, but there were more mistakes, which came at important times.

The Mavericks were flagged for nine penalties, with Minnesota-Duluth receiving eight. The Mavericks now have 14 more penalties than their opponents. The Mavericks had the ball inside Minnesota-Duluth's 20-yard line five times without scoring.

"Last week, we played well for three quarters and didn't finish (in an 18-14 loss to St. Cloud State)," Jamrog said. "This week, we didn't start well, but we finished and never gave up. We were one inside kick away from making it pretty interesting."

The game couldn't have started more poorly for the Mavericks, whose second possession was 18 plays that started at their own 13 and eventually reached the Minnesota-Duluth 6 about seven minutes later.

But a penalty backed the ball to the 20, and Jason Tompkins missed a 30-yard field goal.

A fumbled snap gave Minnesota-Duluth the ball at the Mavericks' 24, and it took three plays for the Bulldogs to score on a 6-yard pass from Ted Schlawke to Greg Aker.

Minnesota-Duluth scored on its next possession, as Marek Seta ran in from the 1.

The Mavericks had another chance to score in the second

quarter, but a pass was dropped in the end zone and the drive ended after a fake field goal was stopped.

Just before halftime, the Bulldogs held the Mavericks without a first down, then blocked a punt, with LaShawn making the block and recovery in the end zone for a 21-0 lead.

The Mavericks' Jimmie Gunn made an interception on the first play of the third quarter, returning the ball to the Minnesota-Duluth 9. But four plays led to just four yards as the Bulldogs held.

"It's very frustrating, but you have to come back and make the next play, the next series and execute," said Gunn, who made 16 tackles to go with two interceptions and a forced fumble.

The Mavericks finally got on the board when Tompkins kicked a 42-yard field goal midway through the third quarter.

"When you get opportunities on a short field, you have to do it," Jamrog said. "When we needed to stop them, we didn't. When we needed a big play on offense, we didn't get it done."

A botched fake field goal by Minnesota-Duluth led to Melvin Matlock's 82-yard fumble return that made it 21-10 with 13:34 to play. After Minnesota-Duluth added its final touchdown, the Mavericks scored again as Sean Treasure capped a nine-play drive with a 3-yard run, which made it 28-16.

After causing a fumble, the Mavericks struck quickly, with Jamie VanDenElzen hitting Tyrell Smith with 64-yard pass, and Tompkins' PAT made it 28-23 with 1:37 remaining.

The ensuing onside was perfectly kicked, and when the ball bounced up, the Mavericks nearly got their hands on it. But Minnesota-Duluth's Brandon Cooley ended up with the ball,



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Minnesota State's Tyrell Smith (9) and Minnesota-Duluth's Marcus Davis battle for the football in the end zone Saturday. The pass was incomplete.

and the Bulldogs ran out the clock, aided by an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.

"When you're not executing, it's hard," Smith said. "We had a lot of three-and-outs, and you get a little frustrated. We know we're capable of marching down the field and scoring points."

The Mavericks accumulated only 282 yards of offense, 74 of which came on a first-quarter

drive and 64 of which came on the touchdown pass to Smith. Minnesota-Duluth had 357 yards, 166 of which came on the ground, with 21 first downs. The Bulldogs had a four-minute edge in time of possession.

Minnesota State (1-5, 0-2 in NCC) plays on the road Saturday at South Dakota, which shares the conference lead with North Dakota.