



# Sports

MINNESOTA STATE 34, TRUMAN STATE 16



Pat Christman

Minnesota State's Randy Earl sacks Truman State quarterback Matt Ticich at the end of the first half Thursday night at Blakeslee Stadium.

## Strong start

### Mavericks open 2006 season with convincing victory

By Chad Courrier  
Free Press Staff Writer

**MANKATO** — Tyrell Smith probably shouldn't have fielded the punt, which was sailing toward the right corner of the end zone. But he grabbed the floating football over his shoulder,

then nearly slipped to the ground, catching himself with one hand.

However, he got up and cut toward the middle of the field as the hole opened. He bobbled the ball slightly at the 30-yard line, then sprinted across the goal line as the final tackler



MSU receiver Tyrell Smith accounted for two Maverick scores, including a 94-yard punt return.

lunged at his feet for a school-record 94-yard return.

"I was thinking that if I don't

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## MSU: Special teams strong

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take this to the house, my coach was going to cuss me out" Smith said. "It was a bad situation, but I got a lot of great blocks. I slipped a little, but when I looked up, everyone was blocking somebody."

Smith, a senior receiver, scored two touchdowns as Minnesota State opened the season with a 34-16 nonconference victory over Truman State in front of 4,236 fans at Blakeslee Stadium on Thursday. The game began a half-hour late because of weather, which also caused an hour delay in the second quarter.

"This was huge to get some motivation and a lot of confidence," Smith said. "(Winning the season-opener) is something that hasn't happened here for five years."

The Mavericks had given up yards in the first quarter, but on Truman State's second punt, Smith dropped back to return the punt. The punt might have gone into the end zone had the Bulldogs not been called for a 5-yard penalty on fourth down.

"The rule is if you're inside the 10, let it go," coach Jeff Jamrog said. "He got some excellent blocking, once you get Tyrell going, he can take it all the way."

"He's a difference-maker. He's tough to handle, and if you double-team him, other receivers will be open. He gives us a huge weapon in the kicking game."

On Truman State's ensuing possession, Minnesota State middle linebacker Tony Hunter blitzed up the middle, pressuring quarterback Matt Ticich into an off-balance throw. Defensive end Randy Earl grabbed the short pass and ran 15 yards for the touchdown just 46 seconds later for a 14-0 lead.

Truman State scored its first touchdown at 12:30 of the second quarter, but Minnesota State answered right away. Ben King completed three straight passes, the final one going 41 yards to Smith for a touchdown and a 21-7 lead.

Truman State followed with a 16-play drive that ended with a missed field goal as game officials called off action because of weather.

When the game resumed after an hour delay, Truman State's Mickey Massuci made a 37-yard field goal that made it 21-10 with 2:22 to go in the half.

Melvin Matlock's 36-yard



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Minnesota State's Allen King breaks up a pass in the end zone intended for Truman State's Richard Mayson during the second quarter Thursday at Blakeslee Stadium. King was called for a pass interference penalty on the play.

kick return gave the Mavericks another chance before halftime. King completed seven straight passes, the final being a 20-yarder to Bryan Alberty with 10 seconds to play, and Jason Tompkins' fourth PAT made it 28-10 at halftime.

"We had some great plays, and we scored on offense and defense and special teams," Jamrog said. "If you can score in all three phases, you're probably going to win."

The Mavericks amassed 217 yards of offense in the first half, using just one running play. King was 17 of 23 for 203 yards.

The Mavericks used a trick play to score midway through the third quarter. Following a short punt, the Mavericks struck on the first play as King handed to Alberty, who handed to Smith on the reverse. Smith then pitched back to King, who found Alberty all alone on the right sideline for an easy touchdown. A bad snap foiled the PAT, but Minnesota State led 34-10.

A fourth-down stop at the 3-yard line allowed the Mavericks to maintain the margin early in the fourth

quarter. Truman State turned a Mavericks' fumble into a touchdown with 7:09 to play, converting twice on fourth down to make it 34-16 on a 4-yard pass from Ticich to Richard Mayson.

King finished with 23 completions in 32 attempts for 283 yards and three touchdowns. Bryan Dalton was the leading receiver with seven catches for 72 yards. Alberty added six receptions for 95 yards and two scores, and Smith had five catches for 69 yards and a touchdown.

Safety Blake Freese made a team-high 12 tackles, two more than Nick Wilson. Minnesota State had four sacks, with Earl getting 13.

Truman State had 439 yards of total offense as Ticich passed for 164 yards and rushed for 51. Phil Kenney rushed for 125 yards.

Minnesota State (1-0) plays next on Saturday, Sept. 2, against Northwest Missouri State at Maryville, Mo.

"Instead of being 0-1 and playing a top-ranked team, we have a new sense of confidence," Jamrog said. "It was a great win."