



Sports

Le Center prevails
over Blooming Prairie



Undersized Flannigan is overpowering for MSU

Quick defensive end had big game vs. St. Cloud last week; Mavs face Bulldogs today

By Chad Courrier
Free Press Staff Writer

MANKATO — He lined up on the outside and used his speed to beat the tackle and get to the quarterback. He lined up inside and used his quickness to split the center and guard to get to the quarterback.

Last Saturday, Darnell Flannigan was the best defensive player on the field for Minne-

sota State. St. Cloud State, too. With 11 tackles — including five for loss — one sack, a fumble recovery and two pass breakups for hitting the quarterback's arm as it was in the throwing motion, Flannigan was an honorable-mention selection by D2football.com as defensive player of the week.

"It's just a matter of the defense coming together," Flannigan said. "If you do your

job, the plays will come to you. Somebody will make the play."

At 6-foot-0 and generously listed at 230 pounds, Flannigan's task always seem daunting, giving up at least 50 pounds to the offensive tackles of the North Central Conference. So he uses his greatest assets — quickness and speed — to overcome the physical mismatch.

"He has a great motor, he's

really worked hard on his pass rush," coach Jeff Jamrog said. "He plays the run well, he uses great leverage.

"He's improved most in his get-off time. When the ball is snapped, he's like a time bomb going off. He's definitely caught the attention of opposing coaches."

Flannigan, a native of Atlanta, Ga., stayed in Mankato last summer, along with several

teammates, to participate in the weight program and informal workouts. Jamrog said the physical difference between those players and the ones who went home to work out on their own is noticeable.

That has allowed Flannigan to blossom physically and the defense to generate better chemistry, with many of the starters now in their second season together.



The Mavericks' Darnell Flannigan has 37 tackles and 3.5 sacks this season. He made 11 tackles last week against St. Cloud State.

"The exciting thing about our defense is that you can't double-team me because there

Please see MSU, Page D5

MSU: Eight career QB sacks

Continued from Page D1

are three other explosive D linemen," Flannigan said. "(Defensive tackle) Solo (Taumalolo) is amazing, we have a freshman tackle (Chris Brunkhorst) who is playing well, and the other defensive end (Jonathan Shaw) is bringing it more.

"I don't think they'll take a chance on doubling me. That wouldn't be very smart."

The defense has allowed 112 points, an average of 22.5 points per game, but the Mavericks held the potent St. Cloud State offense to just three points through three quarters last Saturday.

"That was our best effort on defense," Flannigan said. "We still had a couple of mental

"(Last week against St. Cloud State) was our best effort on defense. We still had a couple of mental breakdowns. With a little more practice time and film-watching, we'll get everybody on the same page."

DARNELL FLANNIGAN,
Mavericks defensive end

breakdowns. With a little more practice time and film-watching, we'll get everybody on the same page."

Flannigan ranks second on the team with 37 tackles, 15 of which have been for loss. He

has 3.5 sacks, 8.0 for his career, and he'll occasionally drop back into pass coverage.

He expects the defense to have a strong game today against Minnesota-Duluth. It's been a disappointing five games so far, but season goals are still within reach.

"Once you have a bounce-back year like we did last year, everybody's going to want to give you their best shot and show you that you're not as good as you think you are," Flannigan said. "We haven't stepped up to the challenge for all four quarters. At times, we look like we're a championship-bound team, and at other times, we look like the undisciplined team from a couple of years ago."