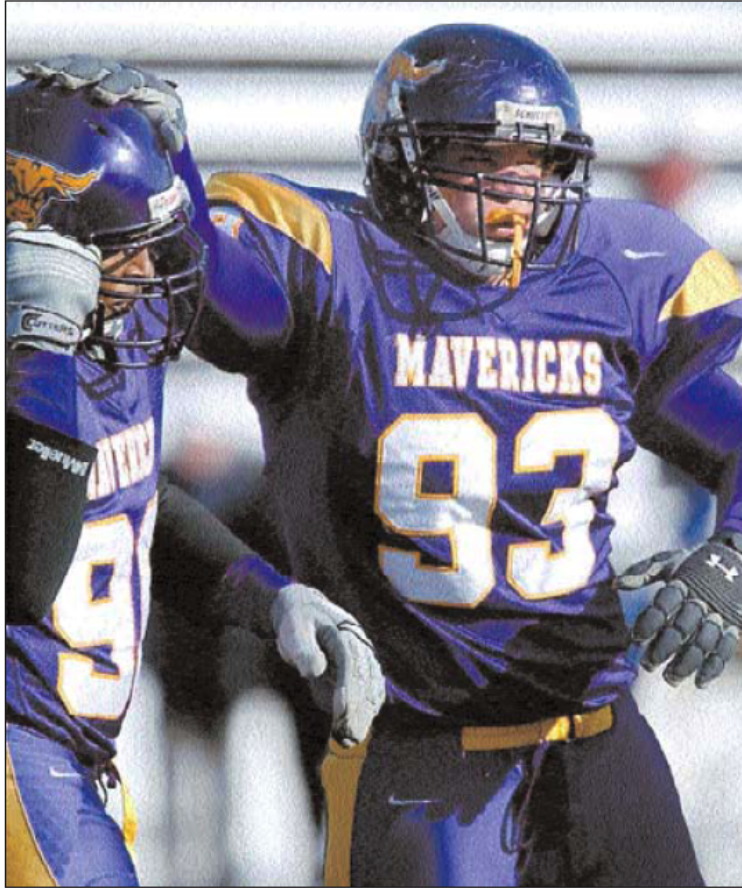




Sports

LEARNING TOGETHER



Photos by Pat Christman

Defensive linemen Brad Diel (93) and Randy Earl (left) are redshirt freshmen, part of coach Jeff Jamrog's first recruiting class at Minnesota State.

Grow or regress?

Young Jamrog recruits fill valuable rolls, learn valuable lessons in '06

By Chad Courrier
Free Press Staff Writer

MANKATO — Brad Diel thought he had a chance to play some, contribute in a meaningful way after spending last season as a redshirt freshman.

But the Mankato East grad has started the last five games at defensive tackle, making an impact that coach Jeff Jamrog said has been a surprise.

Diel is part of Jamrog's first true recruiting class, one of 24 sophomores or redshirt freshmen that represent the future of the program. Fourteen players of those players who came to Minnesota State in 2005 are

listed in the Mavericks' two-deep position roster.

"I was just happy to be able to help out the team," Diel said. "It's a great bunch of guys. I thought we'd have a better season, but I've learned a lot."

Jamrog was hired in the summer of 2004 and didn't have much of a chance at recruiting, having to settle for players who hadn't been claimed yet by other programs. By 2005, he was more established and was able to recruit his type of player.

Sophomore safety Blake Freese, safety Ryan Weinzierl, linebacker Tony Hunter and defensive tackle Chris

"A lot of guys have made a pretty heavy impact. There were a lot of snaps in the NCC by guys who still have two or three years of eligibility remaining."

JEFF JAMROG,
MSU head football coach

Brunkhorst were forced to play major roles as true freshmen, and Freese is the Mavericks' leading tackler this season, while Brunkhorst ranks 11th. Hunter was near the top of the tackling chart before suffering a season-ending knee injury midway through the season.

Please see RECRUITS, Page C4



Sophomore safety Blake Freese led the Minnesota State football team with 73 tackles this season.

RECRUITS: Diel among 16 redshirts

Continued from Page C1

Offensive tackle Andy Schoonover would be starting but he injured an ankle in the season-opener and was redshirted. Josh Clausen and Jake Droessler have been backups on the offensive line.

"A lot of guys have made a pretty heavy impact," Jamrog said. "There were a lot of snaps in the NCC by guys who still have two or three years of eligibility remaining."

Diel was one of 16 freshmen who were allowed to redshirt last season, building their body and confidence enough to contribute this season. He started this season as a backup but entered the starting lineup midway through the season because of injuries, finishing with 23 tackles, 3.5 tackles for loss and 1.5 sacks.

"I had a great learning year (as a redshirt)," Diel said. "Watching (Spencer Dickinson) and (Brunkhorst) had helped me

get better."

Defensive end Randy Earl and tackle Adrian Battles are redshirt freshmen that have started every game, while defensive tackle Jared Schwanz, tackle Mike Ziedler, running back Julian Phipps and linebacker Trey Roemhildt have been key contributors as backups.

"I was able to get stronger and faster (last year)," Earl said. "I recommend every freshman should redshirt if you're not needed to play. You get to understand the plays and the way we practice."

Though the Mavericks went 6-16 over the last two seasons, with a 2-12 record in NCC games, there is still a sense of optimism that Diel and his classmates will be the ones to lead a turnaround.

"I hope every class helps," Diel said. "We have quite a few guys trying to learn as we go, and we've had a great bunch of seniors helping us. Every class makes us better."