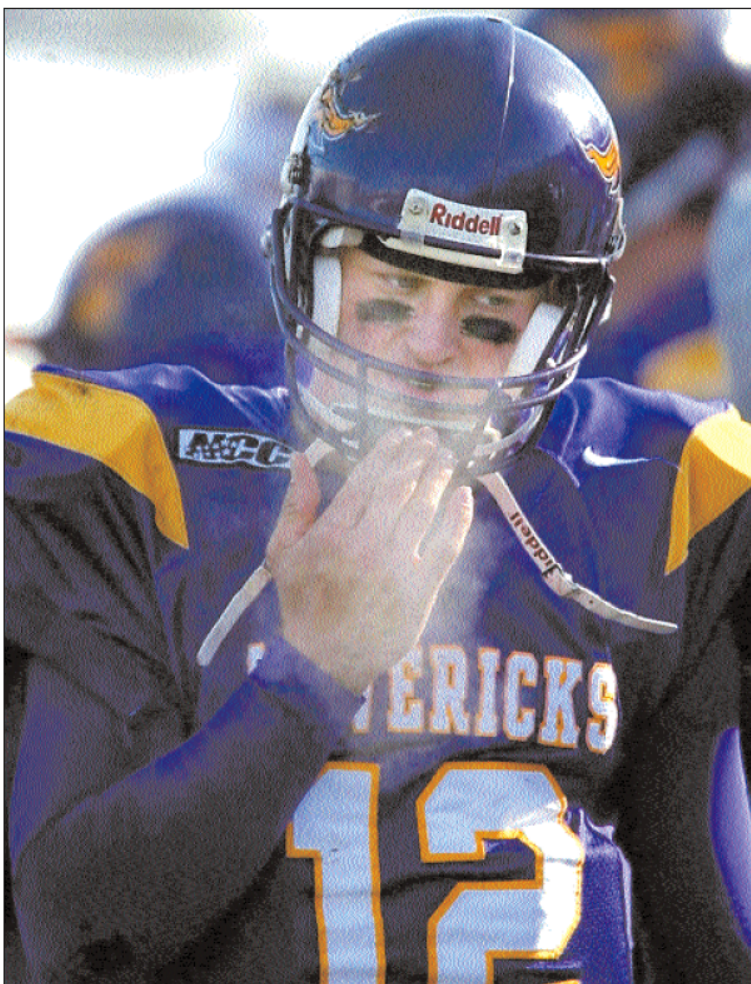


MSU ATHLETE: FOOTBALL OR BASEBALL?



Pat Christman

Minnesota State quarterback Ben King must decide if he wants to use his one remaining semester of eligibility on playing baseball or football.

A Kingly decision

Mavericks QB/pitcher has only one semester of eligibility left

By Chad Courrier
Free Press Staff Writer

MANKATO — Ben King has been able to play both football and baseball for all of his life, but he now has to choose between the sports, and he has to make a choice quickly.

"I have to make a decision soon to be fair to both teams," King said. "I have to do what's best for academics and athletics, and I don't know what that is."

King and the Minnesota State football team wrapped up the season Saturday in a 35-21 loss to Western Washington at Blakeslee Stadium, and he still has one semester of eligibility remaining. That means he can pitch for the baseball team this spring, or he could wait until next fall and play quarterback for the football squad.

But he can't do both.

"I love both sports," King said.

"Both coaches have been great to me."

King had a strong finish to the football season, completing a single-game, school-record 286 passes. His 483 pass attempts was the second most, and 3,107 yards passing was third. In the last three games, King completed 110 of 173 passes for 1,273 yards and 10 touchdowns, the most prolific stretch ever at Minnesota State.

If King returns for his final season, he'll have a chance to break all of Minnesota State's career passing records.

"Anytime you have a chance to have a four-year starter who has been in the system for a year, that's a bonus," football coach Jeff Jamrog said.

If King doesn't come back, sophomore Ryan Fick and redshirt freshman Tyler Roebke would compete for the starting position.

"We never got Ryan Fick the snaps to see where he is," Jamrog said. "It will be an important spring (practice) for him. Tyler Roebke has done an excellent job with the scout team."

King is a right-handed pitcher who has produced an 11-7 record in three seasons of baseball and would likely be penciled into the Mavericks' rotation. Last season, King was 6-4 with a 3.43 earned run average, allowing 51 hits and 24 walks in 65.2 innings with 61 strikeouts.

King still has two semesters, plus a semester of student teaching, before he can graduate. He wants to talk with both Jamrog and Minnesota State baseball coach Dean Bowyer before making a final decision.

"It's tough right now at the end of a long season," King said. "There's no reason to postpone (the decision) too long."