

The Free Press



Sunday,
November 12, 2006
www.mankatoofreepress.com

Sports

MSU football notebook

Mavericks bid farewell to sixteen seniors

By Chad Courrier
Free Press Staff Writer

MANKATO — Both Minnesota State and Western Washington had the opportunity to end the season on a three-game winning streak, but following Saturday's 35-21 loss, the Mavericks head into the offseason with disappointment.

"It could have been a springboard into the offseason and put everyone in a good mood right away," coach Jeff Jamrog said.

The Mavericks had a chance to move into a fourth-place tie in the conference, the best finish since 2002. Instead, Minnesota State falls to eighth place. Minnesota State has had just four three-game winning streaks since 1995 and only 10 three-game winning streaks in conference play since 1983.

Last game for seniors

Quarterback/receiver Joshua Bryant, quarterback Ben King, linebacker Dan Ficcadenti, running back Bryan Alberty, cornerback Melvin Matlock, safety Allen King, receiver Tyrell Smith, cornerback Nick Wilson, running back Dan Smedberg, linebacker Steve Porter, punter Jonathan Christensen, tight end Dan Harke, linebacker Tido Labossiere, center Zach Verdin, guard Ben

Roberson and tackle Adam VanZeeland all played their final game Saturday.

Ficcadenti, the only fifth-year senior in the program, made six tackles. Wilson, Smedberg, Harke, Roberson and VanZeeland are the only other players who have been at Minnesota State for four seasons. Wilson had five tackles, while Smedberg had 36 yards rushing and 16 yards receiving.

"Guys that have been in the program four years, that's the difference," Jamrog said.

"We're starting to get that (in future classes), not as much as we want, but you'll see more kids go through this program for four, five years."

Of the other seniors, Smith had a career-high 11 receptions for 91 yards, Alberty had seven receptions for 47 yards, and Bryant had four receptions for 43 yards and a touchdown for the third straight game. King made 10 tackles and his fourth interception of the season, while Porter had five tackles and Matlock had four.

"The effort and desire is always there, regardless of the record," Smith said.

Staff turnover

The Mavericks have had trouble retaining assistant coaches over the last decade, but Jamrog likes his staff and feels like there won't be as

much change this season.

Minnesota State has had five offensive coordinators in the last five seasons, which had hindered the offensive development.

Ken Gordon is in his second season as defensive coordinator, while Spence Nowinsky has switched from defensive line to offense line and back to defensive line in his three seasons.

"Staff stability is important so the kids understand the coaches' expectations and standards," Jamrog said. "I'll have to see what everybody's plans are. It's tough to guarantee anything in this business."

Three-game blitz

Quarterback Ben King finished the season with the most prolific three-game passing streak in program history, completing 110 of 173 passes for 1,273 yards and 10 touchdowns, including the top two games of 505 and 433 yards.

On Saturday, he completed 36 of 64 passes for 335 yards and three touchdowns, setting a single-game record for attempts.

Receiver Bryan Dalton caught 32 passes in those three games to give him 73 receptions for the season, missing the record by one catch. Josh Bryant, who started the season at quarterback, caught a touchdown pass in each of the last three games.



Photos by Pat Christman

Minnesota State wide receiver Josh Bryant stretches for a touchdown with three seconds remaining in the first half of Saturday's North Central Conference matchup against Western Washington at Blakeslee Field. Bryant, a senior, played his final game for the Mavericks.