



# Sports

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Big conservation gains in small packages



Minnesota State's Bryan Dalton lunged for a touchdown ahead of University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh defender Scott Savinski during the first half Saturday at Blakeslee Stadium.



Pat Christman

## Mavs put 'D' in 'TD'

Defensive scores key win over UW-Oshkosh

By Chad Courrier  
Free Press Staff Writer

**MANKATO** — Earlier this week, the Minnesota State football coaches were meeting, and secondary coach Joe Klanderman was asked to rank the players in order of who would get the first interception Saturday against Wisconsin-Oshkosh.

Given that none of the defensive backs or linebackers had made an interception, senior cornerback Nick

Wilson was ranked as the fifth-most likely player to nab an interception.

"I think Nick took that as an insult," Minnesota State coach Jeff Jamrog said. "The big thing was it was six points and a huge play in the game."

Wilson's interception and 27-yard return for a touchdown was a key play in the Mavericks' 33-22 nonconference victory over Division III Wisconsin-Oshkosh on Saturday night in front of

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4,038 fans at Blakeslee Stadium.

Minnesota State had just been stopped on a fourth-down play at the Wisconsin-Oshkosh 5-yard line, and the Titans, up 7-0 late in the first quarter, had the momentum. But Wisconsin-Oshkosh quarterback Joe Patek floated an out pass, which Wilson anticipated.

"Going down 7-0 when we had such high expectations of making this game look good, it was ugly," Wilson said. "We talked before the game about how the defense had to make some big plays. A corner only gets two or three opportunities a game, and you have to take advantage of them."

The Titans got on the board first on a 48-yard scoring pass as receiver Steve Stoltz got past Wilson. But after the Mavericks' nine-play drive ended at the Titans' 5, Wilson got his revenge.

Two running plays netted a

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JEFF JAMROG,  
Minnesota State head coach

first down, then Patek tried to pass. Wilson, a senior from Mankato West, had seen a tendency on film and made his third career interception.

"I just jumped it and trotted into the end zone," he said.

The Titans fumbled the ensuing kickoff, which was recovered by John Jones at the 30. On the next play, quarterback Ben King threw a touchdown pass to Tyrell Smith. Jonathan Christensen's second PAT made it 14-7.

After Wisconsin-Oshkosh closed with 14-13 in the second quarter, the Mavericks made a nine-play, 64-yard drive that ended with a 20-yard pass from King to Bryan Dalton. The 21-13 margin remained until halftime.

Wisconsin-Oshkosh scored on its first possession of the

third quarter, but the Mavericks answered. After Melvin Mallock returned the kickoff to the Titans' 27. On the second play, Dalton caught another touchdown pass from King, this one covering 9 yards. The PAT kick failed, and the Mavericks led 27-19.

A fourth-quarter field goal cut the lead to 27-22, but the Mavericks' defense scored. Defensive end Randy Earl made his second interception of the season at the Titans' 15, and as he was going down, he lateraled to linebacker Dan Ficadenti, who ran the final 10 yards for a 33-22 lead with 6:36 remaining.

"When you score two defensive touchdowns, you're normally going to win the game," Jamrog said.

The Mavericks rushed for a

season-high 83 yards, with Bryan Alberty getting 87 yards on 16 carries. King, who had passed for at least 250 yards in both games this season, completed 15 of 29 for 208 yards and three scores.

Wisconsin-Oshkosh totaled 388 yards, with 166 yards rushing. Andy Moriarty rushed 26 times for 111 yards.

"We made enough plays to win," Jamrog said. "It's like shooting a 73 in golf. You might have some double bogeys, and you might make some long puts. The bottom line is you still end up with a pretty good score."

"But we can play so much better, and we need to."

The Mavericks (2-1) begin the North Central Conference schedule Saturday at Augustana.

"This is when our season starts," Wilson said. "We have eight conference games, and we didn't win one last season. We have a lot of hungry guys back because we want to be in the mix for a conference title."



Pat Christman

Minnesota State's Kevin Lauer (53) celebrated after teammate John Jones recovered a fumble in the first half.