

## Mavericks fall short in final game

Vikings use strong second half, pooch kick to down MSU

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**MANKATO** — Senior Minnesota State wideout Tyrell Smith ended his career with a career day Saturday.

His 11 catches against Western Washington was one of the few bright spots for the Mavericks as they were topped by the Vikings 34-21 in their season finale at Blakeslee Stadium.

"It would've helped the program to finish on a three-game winning streak," MSU head coach Jeff Jamrog said. "I feel bad for our seniors. We didn't come out and play; that was not the Maverick football team of the second half of the season."

"I overlook that because of the loss," Smith said in reference to his career-day. "Statistically, it's a



Minnesota State's Josh Bryant (2) converts a two-point conversion to tie the game at 14 in the second quarter of the Mavericks game with Western Washington Saturday at Blakeslee Stadium. The Mavericks lost 35-21.

good feeling, but I would have preferred to win."

The Mavericks, riding the momentum from their comeback win last week over Central

Washington, opened the contest as if they hadn't missed a beat.

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Minnesota State running back Dan Smedberg (center) moves the chains as Western Washington's Todd McClellan (right) tries to strip the ball and Rosso trails behind. Smedberg led the Mavericks in rushing with 36 yards.

## MSU: King throws three touchdowns

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Ben King connected with four different receivers on MSU's opening drive, the final pass finding Tory Chapell in the back of the end zone to cap an 8-play, 49-yard drive. Ben Spencer's PAT attempt was blocked.

Western Washington wasted no time responding as Craig Garner took a handoff 43-yards for a touchdown to give the Vikings a 7-6 lead with 5:51 remaining in the first quarter.

It looked as if an old-fashioned shootout was in the works. That perception quickly changed as most of the first half featured punt exchanges by MSU's Josh Christensen and WWU's Corbin Anderson.

But with five minutes left in the second quarter, Western Washington broke the scoring drought when Adam Perry feathered a 24-yard pass to the end zone that was snagged by the left hand of Casey Dell to give WWU a 14-6 edge.

The Mavericks countered with a scoring drive of their own, ending in a four-yard pass from King to Josh Bryant with three seconds remaining in the second quarter.

The combo hooked up again on the two-point conversion, knotting the game 14-14 at halftime.

The Vikings christened the second half with an inside kick that they recovered, followed by 30-yard scoring pass from Perry to Garner for a 21-14 Vikings lead.



Western Washington's Casey Dell (center) hauls in a touchdown pass between Minnesota State's Dan Ficcadenti (right) and Allen King, giving the Vikings a 14-6 lead in the second quarter.

"That was a gusty call to start the half with that pooch kick," Jamrog said. "That was a huge turn in the game."

Huge turn aside, the Mavericks answered with King firing a 41-yard strike to Chris Nolin for a touchdown, capping a 9-play, 67-yard drive to tie the game at 21.

But in the fourth quarter, the Mavericks failed to show up on either side of the ball.

Western Washington began with a

six-yard touchdown scramble from Perry to go up 28-21.

After MSU's ensuing possession yielded a punt, the Vikings took advantage, with Garner scoring his third touchdown of the day on a five-yard run.

"Defensively, it was very disappointing," Jamrog said. "We gave up way too many runs and quick passes."

And King, who had a send-off performance of 335 yards and three touchdowns, couldn't click with his receiving corps.

After three straight incomplete passes, the Mavericks faced fourth-and-10 on the Viking 30-yard line when King's pass to Bryant was broken up, turning the ball over on downs with 5:59 remaining.

Western Washington ran out the clock with a series of first downs.

"We just didn't make many plays in the second half," King said. "Their defense did a great job all game long. You got to tip your cap to them."

Although he and his senior counterparts didn't exit Blakeslee Stadium for the last time with a victory, Smith was able look back and smile on his experience as a Maverick football player.

"The ball didn't play our way this time, but I don't mind going out like this," Smith said.

"There has always been a desire and want to win no matter what our record was. Everybody goes out there and rips it up and that's one thing that will never change about Maverick football."