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Sports

Wolves down Maveric
at Target Center



Dan Ragsdale has joined the Minnesota State football team coaching staff. Ragsdale will serve as offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach. He was the offensive coordinator at Minnesota Duluth last season.

MSU lands new offensive coordinator

Ragsdale turned UMD into one of NCC's top offenses

By Chad Courier
Free Press Staff Writer

MANKATO — Minnesota State football coach Jeff Jamrog liked what he saw from the Minnesota Duluth offense last season. Even though his Mavericks lost 28-23 in the homecoming game that day at Blakeslee Stadium, he admired what the Bulldogs offense was able to do.

So when the offensive coordinator position came open last month, Jamrog looked around the North Central Conference for possible candidates, and he quickly zeroed in on Minnesota Duluth's Dan Ragsdale, who in one season took the Bulldogs from nearly last in most NCC offensive categories to near the top.

"The one-season turnaround (at Minnesota Duluth) in offensive performance was outstanding," Jamrog said. "And it's not like he did that with a boatload of all-conference players. Hopefully, he can bring some of that flavor to us."

Ragsdale, 28, has joined Jamrog's staff this week as offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach, replacing Garin Higgins and becoming the sixth offensive coordinator in the program in the last six seasons. Ragsdale said he's excited about bringing the same improvement that he masterminded at Minnesota Duluth to the Mavericks' program, which despite a 2-9 record could have won five more games with an extra touchdown.

RAGSDALE: UMD 13th in passing last season

Continued from Page D1

"This is a pretty good opportunity for me and my family," he said. "If I stay at the Division II level, I want to win a national championship, and we had a good thing in Duluth. But I see this as a situation that's about ready to explode."

The Bulldogs passed for 280.8 yards per game last season, which ranked 13th nationally. Ragsdale said his coaching influences from playing and coaching in an indoor league, as well as his quarterbacking days at the University of Redlands, where he was named the Division III player of the year, have shaped his philosophy.

Against Minnesota State last season, the Bulldogs rushed a season-high 45 times for 166 yards because Ragsdale thought that was the best plan. In the first round of the NCAA playoffs, the Bulldogs attempted an NCAA record 64 passes, completing 34 for 295 yards in a 23-12 loss at North Dakota.

"I can't put a style on it," Ragsdale said. "Will we throw it? Absolutely. Will we be near the top in the North Central in passing yards? Absolutely. Will we be near the top in the NCAA in passing yards? Probably."

"I want to put the best five skill athletes on the field with the quarterback, and I feel we have some of the best receivers in the league here. Whoever

the lucky quarterback is, he'll probably feel like a lottery winner."

At Minnesota Duluth, Ragsdale bypassed two experienced quarterbacks and went with redshirt freshman Ted Schlafke, who had been switched to defensive back. Schlafke progressed into one of the top quarterbacks in the NCC, completing 305 of 490 passes for 3,335 yards with 33 touchdowns and 17 interceptions. He also rushed for 256 yards and two scores.

Last season, the Mavericks struggled at quarterback, with Jamie VanDenElzen, Joshua Bryant and D.J. Porter all getting snaps, sometimes in the same game. VanDenElzen and Porter have graduated, leaving Bryant to compete with redshirt freshman Ryan Fick.

"It will probably be taken care of the first week of spring ball," Ragsdale said. "We don't have any quarterbacks right now, we have a bunch of throwers. We'll see who evolves into a quarterback."

"One thing for sure, it's not going to be a revolving door. We'll have one quarterback who the team can rally around and try to win some ball-games."

Jamrog has one more staff opening to fill. Defensive line coach Brian Mohnson left to join Turner Gill's staff at the University of Buffalo, and Jamrog said he wants to have that position filled within 10 days.

Please see RAGSDALE, Page D3