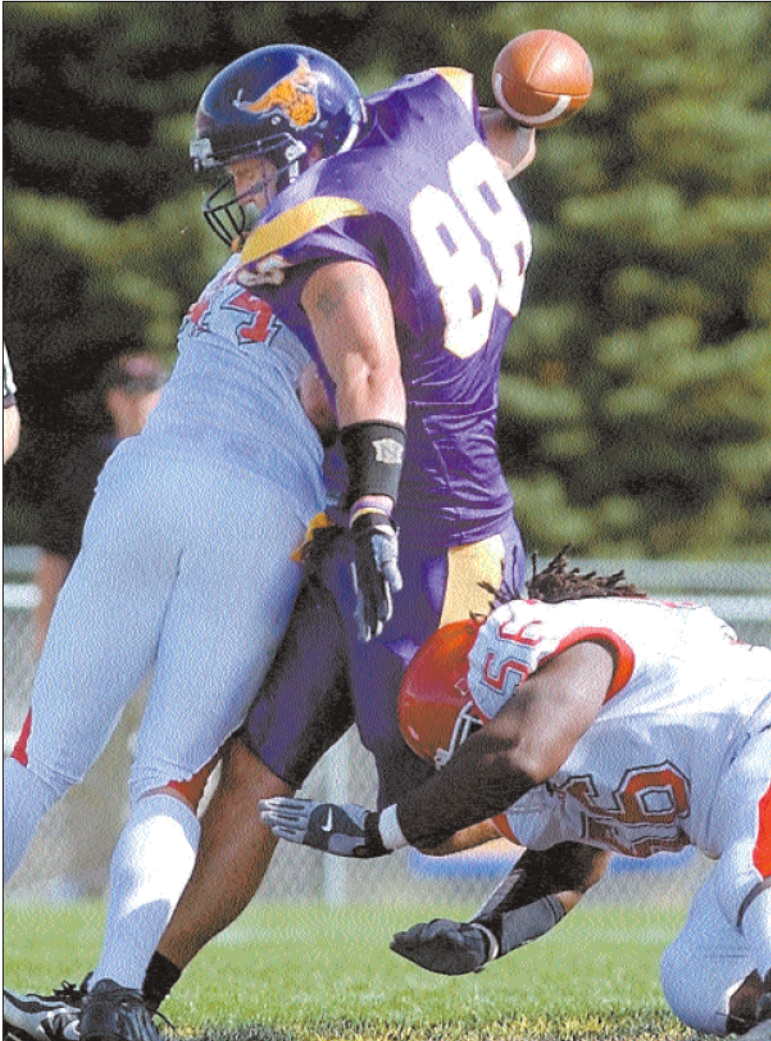




# Sports

## NEBRASKA-OMAHA 21, MINNESOTA STATE 14



Pat Christian

Minnesota State tight end Jeff Fiedler gets sandwiched by Nebraska-Omaha linebackers Bobby Danenhauer (44) and Antwain Woods during Saturday's homecoming game at Blakeslee Stadium.

# Not enough in the crunch

Mavericks commit five turnovers; fail to tie game on final possession

By Chad Courrier  
Free Press Staff Writer

**MANKATO** — It seems far too often, Minnesota State coach Jeff Jamrog finds himself shaking his head after games, lamenting missed opportunities. Three interceptions, two fumbles, missed receiver, dropped passes ... the Mavericks can't seem to come up with big plays in crunch time against good opponents.

"Great teams make great plays down the stretch," Jamrog said.

"When they needed a touchdown at the end, they got one. When we needed to score, we shot ourselves in the foot."

Nebraska-Omaha scored on a broken play in the fourth quarter to defeat Minnesota State 21-14 Saturday in front of a homecoming crowd of 4,647 at Blakeslee Stadium. It was another game that came down to the final possession, with the Mavericks walking off the field with heads held low.

"Things happen, and you try to respond positively," quarterback Ben

King said. "Coaches talk about overcoming adversity and do your job. When we were in position to make plays, most of the time I don't think we did."

Nebraska-Omaha missed a scoring opportunity on its first possession, fumbling through the end zone for a touchback.

The Mavericks countered with a 12-play drive, sparked by a fake field goal. King, the holder, threw a 17-yard pass to Ernest Walker after the Mavericks lined up for a 43-yard field goal.

Three plays later, Julian Phipps scored on a 1-yard run, and Ben Spencer's PAT made it 7-0.

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## MSU: Game tied after third

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Nebraska-Omaha answered quickly as quarterback Zach Miller, on third-and-11, ran 77 yards on an option play, and the score remained tied 7-7 until just before halftime. Nebraska-Omaha, after taking over after a punt put the ball at the 2-yard line, drove 19 plays in 7:46 to score the go-ahead touchdown.

Following an interception off a tipped pass, Nebraska-Omaha had a chance to add more points before halftime, but Tony Hunter blocked a 41-yard field goal attempt.

The Mavericks tied the game on the final play of the third quarter. Bryan Albery's diving catch at the 1-yard line set up a short scoring pass from King to Dan Smedberg, and Spencer's PAT made it 14-all.

A dropped pass third down set up Nebraska-Omaha's winning drive, which needed to go only 42 yards. On third down from the 9, the Nebraska-Omaha back ran the wrong way, but Miller ran into the hole, slipping through the defense for the touchdown.

"I proud as hell of these guys," Jamrog said. "They competed and battled, unfortunately we didn't come out on the winning end. That's the best game we've played, and we had a chance to win. We wanted to take the next step and get back in the conference race, but we didn't."

The Mavericks had a final opportunity in the last two minutes. Minnesota State got 12 plays that pushed the ball to Nebraska-Omaha's 40, but a third-down pass, just after a missed completion could have taken the ball inside the 20, was intercepted.

"We had our chances to get points, but turnovers killed us," King said.

Nebraska-Omaha finished with 412 yards of offense, though only 147 yards came in the second half. Miller rushed for 165 yards, and Kyle Kasperbauer rushed for 161 yards.

"We stuck to the same defense (in the second half), but we just started tackling



Photo by Pat Christian

MSU receiver Bryan Dalton makes a reception as he gets tackled by UNO's Kenny Onatolu. Dalton finished with seven receptions for 106 yards.



UNO running back Kyle Kasperbauer (22) gets hit by MSU cornerback Nick Wilson (left) and a teammate, who caused a fumble that rolled through the end zone for a touchback early in Saturday's game.

better," Hunter said. "We were hoping to get the offense back out there and give them a chance to score more points."

King completed 27 of 53 passes for 277 yards and a touchdown. Bryan Dalton caught seven passes for 106 yards. Minnesota State had

only 15 yards rushing.

"That was an awful big win for us," Nebraska-Omaha coach Pat Behrns said. "We knew this would be a difficult game for us, a difficult place for us to play."

Minnesota State (2-3, 0-2 in NCC) plays Saturday at North Dakota.