



Sports

Trotter makes move to gridiron

By Chad Courrier
Free Press Staff Writer

MANKATO — Rueben Trotter had watched the drill, and he felt prepared as he took a three-point stance, just a couple of feet opposite defensive teammate Steven Porter.

When the whistle blew, Porter exploded out of his stance, nailing Trotter and sending him backward.

"I didn't know what I was doing," Trotter said. "Coach said 'hit,' and he hit me. Next time, I'll be ready."

Trotter, who last month wrapped up his college basketball career, is trying to catch on with the football team, using the month-long spring practice to see if the skills learned on the court will apply on the field.

"He's got good size, he's athletic and physical," Minnesota

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TROTTER: Must learn quick

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State football coach Jeff Jamrog said. "His attitude is excellent."

"Part of spring ball is to experiment with personnel. Certainly, this experiment is taking a young man who did a tremendous job on the basketball court and see if he can help the football team."

Trotter, a Chicago native, last played football as a high-school freshman, then broke his ankle while working out in the summer before his sophomore season. He turned his focus to basketball, and he wound up playing two seasons at Lincoln College near his home.

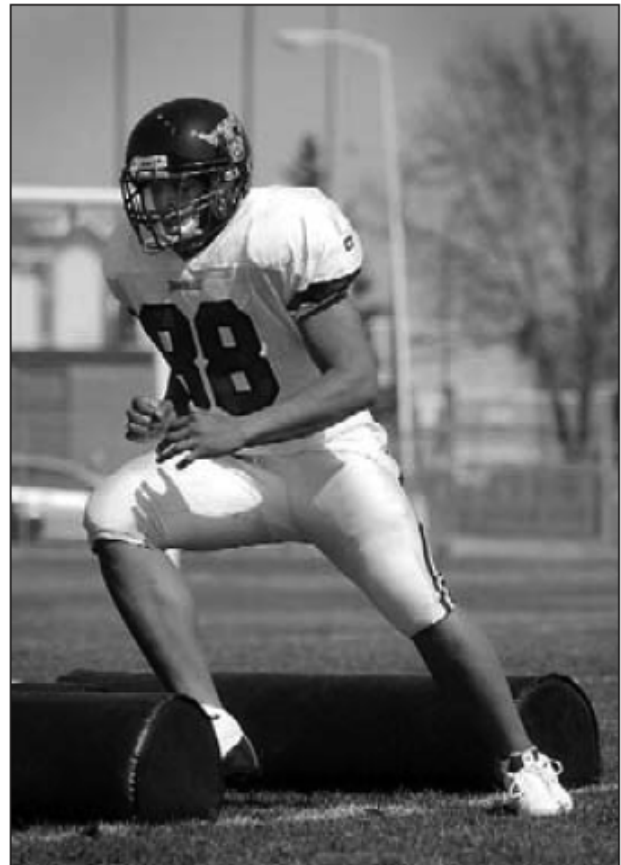
He came to Minnesota State but didn't distinguish himself during his junior season. However, he emerged as a team leader and fan favorite last season, averaging 8.9 points and 4.7 rebounds.

Late in the season, while joking with friends, including Mavericks' receiver Tyrell Smith, the subject of football came up. Trotter, needing the fall semester to complete his degree, decided he'd give it a try this spring.

"A lot of football players (in the NFL), played college basketball," Trotter said. "I want to see if I'm one of those guys."

For April, at least, he is. He's had to adjust to different weight-room workouts, he's watching more film, attending group meetings. He was a physical basketball player, but this kind of contact takes some getting used to.

"It's tough, like going to a foreign country," Trotter said. "I'm learning footwork and schemes, I've had to make the



John Cross

Former basketball player Rueben Trotter is trying to continue his athletic career with the Minnesota State football team as a tight end.

adjustment."

Trotter is one of only three tight ends on the roster, along with senior Dan Harke and redshirt freshman D.Q. Spencer. At 6-foot-3 and 235 pounds, Trotter is big enough to fill the position, athletic enough to contribute. But a six-year layoff is tough to overcome, and he's doing extra work before and after practices.

"Just catching the ball, I had

my hands too far apart," Trotter said. "I was used to catching a basketball."

At the end of April, Trotter will meet with the coaches to determine if he has a future in football.

"If Rueben can beat the odds, that's great," Jamrog said. "At this level, it takes time to develop skills, but he has to deliver quick. If he can help us, it's a win-win. You never know until you try."