



UMD blocks MSU victory

Interceptions, blocked field goal in overtime doom Mavs

By Chad Courrier
 Free Press Staff Writer

MANKATO — Five turnovers ... that's enough to cost any football team a chance to win.

But on Saturday, despite two interceptions and three fumbles, Minnesota State still had an opportunity to upset Minnesota Duluth.

However, a blocked field goal on the last play of overtime allowed the Bulldogs to win 16-13 in a North Central Conference game before 2,831 fans at Blakeslee Stadium.

"This is as disheartening a loss as I've ever been involved in," coach Jeff Jamrog said. "It's like taking a baseball bat in the gut."

The Mavericks dominated play for most of the game, only to be silenced by their own mistakes. Minnesota State gained 353 yards to the Bulldogs' 201 and owned a

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five-minute advantage in time of possession. But the Mavericks scored just one touchdown in five red-zone chances, settling for a pair of fourth-quarter field goals to tie rather than touchdowns to win.

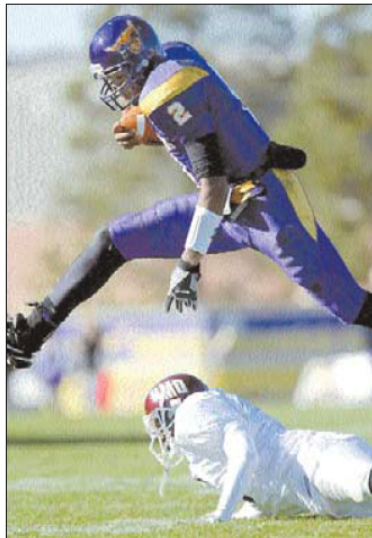
"I thought if we won the rushing battle, we'd win," Jamrog said. "It was working for us, and it wasn't working for them. But you throw in five turnovers, and we didn't get any. We had our hands on a couple of interceptions, and the ball was on the ground a couple of times and we didn't get it. Those are the kind of breaks you need to get over the

hump."

Minnesota State tried just two passing plays in the first two drives and both were intercepted. The Mavericks used six rushing plays to move to the Bulldogs' 33 on the first possession, but quarterback Josh Bryant, starting in place of injured Ben King, threw an interception into the end zone. On the second series, Minnesota State rushed eight times to the Minnesota Duluth 9, but freshman Ryan Fick replaced Bryant and threw an interception that was returned to the Bulldogs' 2. On the next play, Minnesota Duluth's Keith Bizzle scored.

The Mavericks' fourth turnover of the first half led to a 49-yard field goal by Brit Baumann that gave Minnesota Duluth a 10-0 advantage at halftime.

Please see MSU, Page C4



Minnesota State quarterback Josh Bryant leaps over a University of Minnesota Duluth defender during a second-half run Saturday at Blakeslee Field.

Pat Christman

MSU: Mavericks had chances in OT

Continued from Page C1

"We felt good about being up 10-0, but we had the opportunity to be up more," Bulldogs' coach Bubba Schweigert said.

Minnesota State had 174-109 advantage in total yards and a minute more in time of possession in the first half. The Mavericks had already established a season-high of 174 yards rushing, with Bryant gaining 103 yards on 12 carries and running back Bryan Alberty adding 75 yards on 10 attempts.

But the Mavericks were 0 of 3 passing with two interceptions, and two fumbles thwarted other scoring chances.

"We moved the ball real easily in the first half, but the four turnovers killed us," Bryant said. "We didn't do anything different in the second half. We stayed with the game plan and didn't turn the ball over."

The Mavericks' fifth turnover, another fumble, gave Minnesota Duluth the ball early in the third quarter, and the Bulldogs capitalized with a 30-yard field goal.

The Mavericks finally finished a drive to start the fourth quarter. Minnesota State had a 10-play drive that covered 68 yards. Bryant was 5 of 5 passing on the drive, with the final covering 2 yards to tackle Adrian Battle. Ben Spencer kicked the PAT to cut the lead to 13-7.

Spencer's 27-yard field goal with 5:11 remaining made it 13-10, and he kicked a 36-yarder with 1:14 to play to tie the game.

"I try not to think about pressure," said Spencer, a true freshman who took over the place-kicking duties two weeks ago. "I've made a lot of 36-yarders in practice. We practice special teams so that in a game it's no different."

In the overtime, Minnesota Duluth converted a third-and-10, then recovered a fumble at the 9-yard line, setting up Baumann's third field goal, a 26-yarder.

The Mavericks then took over at the 25, and after a short completion, Bryant ran



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University of Minnesota Duluth's LaShawn Bullock pulls in a pass ahead of Minnesota State defender Trey Roemhilt during their game Saturday at Blakeslee Stadium.

14 yards, setting up a first-and-goal. Three incompletions set up Spencer's attempt, which was blocked by Tyler Yelk off the corner, with the ball hitting him in the facemask.

"I got a good jump off the ball," Yelk said. "It was there, and we executed it."

Jamrog said that the get-off time was slow, meaning that from the time the ball was snapped until it was kicked,

extra time allowed the Bulldogs' rush to get closer.

"I hit the ball well, my head was down when I kicked it," Spencer said. "I thought it was good, but then I heard the second thump right away. That's not the sound a kicker wants to hear."

The Mavericks finished with 265 yards rushing and 88 yards passing, with Bryant rushing for 171 yards and passing for 88. The defense

held Minnesota Duluth to 5 yards rushing and 196 yards passing but couldn't create any turnovers.

"Week in and week out, the defense comes to play," end Telema Bobmanuel said. "Everybody plays hard, and we keep fighting. One of these weeks, things will go our way."

Minnesota State (2.5, 0-4) plays 1 p.m. Saturday at St. Cloud State.