



Sports

Maverick notebook

Veteran linebacker has a big game in middle

By **Shane Frederick**
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MANKATO — Dan Ficcadenti found himself in a fortunate position a couple of times Saturday night.

Minnesota State's starting middle linebacker Tony Hunter did not dress because of a groin injury suffered last week, so Ficcadenti moved in from the outside.

"I knew this was going to be a huge opportunity," Ficcadenti said after the Mavericks' 33-22 victory. "I knew I had to step up because (Hunter) is a huge, huge part of our defense."

The only fifth-year player in the football program, Ficcadenti not only led the Mavericks with a career-high 10 tackles, but he helped clinch the game by being in the right place at the right time.

In the fourth quarter, defensive end Randy Earl intercepted a Joe Patek screen pass at the 14-yard line, ran four yards and pitched it back to Ficcadenti, who ran 10 yards for a touchdown to put the Mavericks up by 11 with 6:34 remaining.

"(Earl) started falling down, and I yelled, 'Randy, pitch it. Pitch it,'" Ficcadenti said. "He looked right at me, and I said, 'Pitch it.' It was a heads-up play by him."

While he appreciated the team's second defensive touchdown of the game, coach Jeff Jamrog wasn't crazy about Ficcadenti calling for the ball or Earl's decision to toss it to him.

"We talk about those types of things," Jamrog said. "It makes me a little nervous."

Rush job

Anyone who has watched this year's Maverick team hasn't seen much rushing offense. The Mavericks simply haven't run the ball all that much.

Entering the game, MSU

compiled just 23 carries for 33 yards in two games.

Against Wisconsin-Oshkosh Saturday, the Mavericks had 29 carries for a net 83 yards. Two sacks totaling 17 yards were taken off the final tally.

"I thought we'd make a statement tonight that we do have a running scheme," Jamrog said. "We wanted to mix it up."

With some big holes to run through early, the Mavericks passed their previous season high with 35 yards in the first quarter and had 59 yard on 15 carries at halftime.

Senior Bryan Albery led the Mavericks with 16 carries for 87 yards, a 5.4-yard average.

"We think (Albery) can cause some matchup problems," Jamrog said. "He's a tough guy to deal with."

For kicks

Punter Jonathan Christensen took over field-goal and extra-point kicking duties for Jason Tompkins, who has been hampered by a lingering knee injury and missed Saturday's game.

Christensen was 3 for 5 on PATs, missing his final two tries. He also lined up for a 49-yard field goal midway through the fourth quarter, but it was a fake.

Tompkins kicked in the Mavericks' first two games and was perfect on six extra-point attempts.

"We don't know when he'll be back," Jamrog said.

Up the charts

With three touchdown passes, quarterback Ben King is now alone in fifth place on MSU's all-time list with 31. He entered the game tied with Andrew Shea (1999-2002) with 28.

Also, Tyrell Smith's first-quarter touchdown catch gave him sole possession of ninth place on the Mavericks' all-time list with 11.