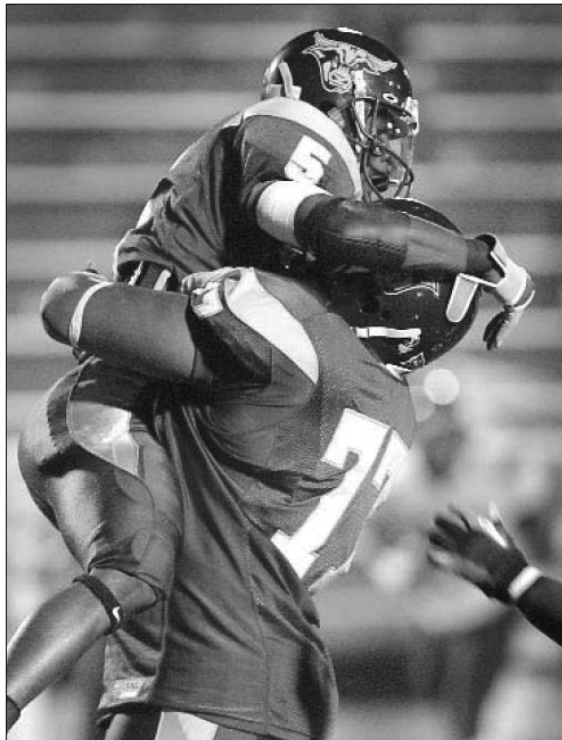




## MSU football notebook



Pat Christman

Minnesota State's Bryan Alberty celebrates with teammate Adrian Battles after catching a touchdown pass during the third quarter Thursday at Blakeslee Stadium.

## Young defensive line makes plays

By **Shaun Frederick**  
 Free Press Staff Writer

**MANKATO** — It was late in the first quarter of his first collegiate game, and defensive end Randy Earl was getting the earhole of his helmet filled with the screams of Minnesota State defensive line coach Spence Nowinsky.

"(Nowinsky) just said, stay in my gap, keep my assignment," said Earl, a redshirt freshman from Racine, Wis.

Earl couldn't have come up with a better way to respond to a little constructive criticism.

On the very next play, Truman State quarterback Matt Ticich tried to avoid a blitz by linebacker Tony Hunter and rushed a pass over the middle. The 6-foot-5, 265-pound Earl had dropped back into coverage, the ball fell into his hands and Earl rumbled 15 yards to the end zone for the Mavericks' second touchdown of the game.

"It felt good," Earl said after MSU's 34-16 victory. "But it feels good to get the win. It's better to get the win."

Earl's score was the top play on a highlight night for the Mavericks' defensive line.

Sophomore defensive tackle Chris Brunkhorst intercepted a pass in the third quarter to thwart a long Truman State drive.

He also knocked down two passes at the line of scrimmage in the first half. Jared Schwanz, a redshirt freshman from St. James, tipped a pass and recovered a fumble, and Earl had 1½ sacks, sharing one

with end Telega Bobmanue.

"I told (defensive coordinator Ken Gordon) we're leading the team in takeaways," said Nowinsky, who is also the Mavericks' assistant head coach. "We knew, coming in, we were going to have some young guys like Randy Earl. They made some great plays, but they made some mistakes, too. I'm real excited that they came out flying around."

### Delay of game

Thursday's tornado warnings caused the game to be suspended for 62 minutes with 5:56 remaining in the second quarter and the Mavericks holding a 21-7 lead.

The stadium was cleared when sirens sounded around 8:05 p.m. Shelter was made available in Taylor Center.

When the game resumed, the rest of the second quarter was played, and there was just a five-minute halftime.

The game's announced attendance was 4,236; about half of the crowd returned when the game restarted.

"It was a weird day,"

Nowinsky said. "It was a long day. ... That's adversity you don't expect. We're lucky the guys responded to that adversity."

The opening kickoff was also delayed 30 minutes due to tornado warnings. When warning sirens first sounded around 5:20 p.m., players warming up on the field were pulled off and the stadium bleachers were cleared.

### What running game?

The Mavericks started the

game with 18 consecutive passing plays and only ran the ball once over the first three quarters.

The only running play in that span came with 4:42 remaining in the second quarter when Bryan Alberty ran for seven yards.

Before that, quarterback Ben King was 9 of 15 for 142 yards and a 41-yard touchdown pass to Tyrell Smith. King was also sacked three times.

Alberty's run was the Mavericks' only handoff of the first half, as King was 7 for 7 on a 56-yard touchdown drive that ended with a 20-yard toss to Alberty with 10 seconds remaining in the half. The Mavericks led 28-10 at halftime.

King, who did not play last season to focus on baseball, finished with 283 yards — the second-best total of his career — and three touchdowns to move into fifth place on both the schools' all-time passing yards (4,205) and passing touchdown (27) lists.

"I think you saw some signs tonight that we could have an excellent offense," coach Jeff Jamrog said.

Backup quarterback Josh Bryant lined up at receiver and caught four passes for 23 yards.

### Early start

Thursday's game was the nation's second college football game of the season. At 6 p.m., Tusculum (Tenn.) hosted Bethel (Tenn.). Tusculum won 17-10.