

Former MSU-Mankato Standout Trying To Stick With Vikings

BY DAVE CAMPBELL
AP Pro Football Writer

MANKATO, Minn. (AP) — Adam Thielen has delighted the crowd at training camp several times with difficult, diving catches.

In the first preseason game for the Minnesota Vikings, the second-year wide receiver showed some elusiveness with three punt returns for a total of 52 yards.

The moment that might have solidified his spot on this team, though, came during a punt at the end of the first half Friday against Oakland. Thielen played the protector position and sprinted down the field to slither around a blocker and tackle Raiders returner Denarius Moore for a 4-yard loss.

“We’ve got a saying around here:

‘The more you can do,’” coach Mike Zimmer said.

Consider that message received. “Whatever they ask, I’m going to try to give it my best ability in whatever they want me to do,” Thielen said.

With his average size and undecorated background, Thielen has become a fan favorite around the facilities at Minnesota State University. That starts, of course, with the fact that he went to school here, parlaying a standout career with the NCAA Division II Mavericks into a spot on the practice squad last season with the Vikings. He’s a native of Minnesota, too, raised in Detroit Lakes about 200 miles northwest of the Twin Cities.

Zimmer called Thielen the “superstar” of Mankato, this riverside college town on the edge of the prairie. “He’s a guy that has a lot of

toughness, a lot of heart. He wants to make the football team, and he’s giving his best effort to do it. You can win a lot of football games with guys like him.”

Thielen’s friend, roommate and fellow wide receiver Cordarrelle Patterson has a spot all sewn up. He’s the first-round draft pick from last year and kickoff returner extraordinaire whom the Vikings have been trying to build much of their offense around. The 6-foot-2, 195-pound Thielen would only be kept for depth and special teams, so he’s naturally unsatisfied with his status.

“I’ve been trying to give him confidence, but he just feels like he’s not part of this team, man,” Patterson said. “I tell him every day, ‘Man, you’re a part of this team,’ and he’s still saying, ‘I’m not. I’m not, man. I’ve still got to go in and prove my-

self.’ But you need that out of a guy, man, feeling like you’re not a part of this team. It’s just making him work harder.”

Cornerback Marcus Sherels is the incumbent punt returner, and he was held out Friday because of a hamstring injury. Special teams coordinator Mike Priefer said Sunday he expects Sherels to keep that job for the start of the regular season.

“Obviously he’ll feel a little bit of a pressure from Adam or any other young returner, but Marcus is a guy that we’ve relied on heavily the last three years and we’ll see him have continued success, I hope,” Priefer said.

Thielen, then, must continue to prove his worth in other ways.

He’s comfortable enough, though, to threaten Patterson about taking his nickname.

“He tried to call himself ‘Mankato Flash.’ He’s trying to steal my name and stuff, you know. But he’s a great guy, man,” Patterson said. “At the end of the day, man, hats off to Adam. I know he’s going to make this team.”

Patterson, keeping his general manager hat on for another moment, said he and other veteran players agreed that Thielen should have made the active roster last year.

“He’s my good buddy, so of course he’s going to say that. Everything happens for a reason, and I wouldn’t trade anything for last year,” Thielen said. “I learned a lot of stuff from those guys and was able to watch how they prepare and the way they play, and I’m taking a lot of that stuff with me.”

Baseball | S.D. State Amateur Tournament



JEREMY HOECK/P&D

Wynot runner Ryan Eskens, right, is tagged out by Akron, Iowa shortstop Randall Waterbury during their second round game Monday night at the S.D. State Amateur Baseball Tournament at Mitchell's Cadwell Park.

Expos Rock Rebels 7-0

BY JEREMY HOECK
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MITCHELL — Talk about making a selection look good.

Brett Scherschligt, a pickup player from Freeman, hurled a 4-hit shutout for Wynot in a 7-0 second round victory Monday night over Akron at the S.D. State Amateur Baseball Tournament in Mitchell.

“We had to keep those guys off balance. That was the plan going in,” said Scherschligt, who needed just 93 pitches.

“We heard they were a good fastball-hitting team, so it was half junk.”

Wynot (17-11) advances to the quarterfinal round and will play the winner of Irene and Larchwood on Thursday at 8 p.m.

The key to the two wins for the Expos? Pitching.

In last week’s first-round win, Scott Morrison pitched a 7-hitter and allowed one run.

Scherchligt, though, was even better.

He allowed only six baserunners, and wasn’t really hit hard until the bottom of the ninth inning when two players singled. By then, however, Scherschligt had a 7-run cushion.

“Having a lead, period, is good, but when you can get a bunch like that, it puts you in a relaxed state,” he said. “It’s easier to throw that way.”

Wynot’s first run came in the top of the fourth inning when Chase Rolfes tripled and scored on a Scott Heimes ground out.

Akron’s first baserunner of the game was Noah Bohlman on a 1-out single in the bottom of the fourth. Bohlman had three of Akron’s four hits.

The Expos added three more runs in the eighth, highlighted by a 2-run single by Scott Heimes, pushing the lead to 4-0.

Wynot scored three times in the top of the ninth — two on an error by the second baseman and the third on an RBI single by Lee Heimes.

It was plenty of support for Scherschligt.

“That was a heckuva game,” manager Lee Heimes



said. “He and (catcher) Jay (Thaler) worked really well together.

“They kept those guys in check the whole game.”

Heimes, like every other Wynot player, has faced Scherschligt plenty of times over their careers. What makes the right-hander tough to hit?

“It’s always a battle, because he moves the ball around and never lets you relax,” Heimes said. “He gives you a good chance to win every time.”

Thaler, a pickup player from Menno, walked three times, while Rolfes singled twice and Scott Heimes drove in three runs.

Akron starter Tyler Stuerman, a former standout pitcher at Northwestern College (Iowa), was equally as dominant — until the eighth. He surrendered one hit over the first seven innings, but took the loss.

It is Wynot, however, that

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JEREMY HOECK/P&D

SCL Teams Battle To Stay Alive At State

ABOVE: Wynot’s Lee Heimes holds up his swing during Monday night’s second round game against Akron, Iowa, at the S.D. State Amateur Baseball Tournament at Mitchell’s Cadwell Park. Wynot won 7-0 to advance to Thursday’s quarterfinal round.

LEFT: Irene pitcher Jack Huether delivers to home plate during Monday night’s second round game against Larchwood, Iowa, at the S.D. State Amateur Baseball Tournament at Mitchell’s Cadwell Park. The game was not concluded at presstime. A game story may be found online at www.yankton.net and in Wednesday’s Press & Dakotan. The winner of that game will face Wynot on Thursday at 8 p.m.

NCAA Seeks Clarification In O’Bannon Ruling

BY MICHAEL MAROT
AP Sports Writer

The NCAA wants clarification on two points in a California judge’s ruling in the landmark Ed O’Bannon case.

The governing body wrote in a brief to the U.S. District Court on Monday that schools want to know which recruits are covered under the ruling which opened the door to athletes receiving a small percentage of the millions of dollars they help generate.

Judge Claudia Wilken wrote it would affect only athletes who enroll after July 1, 2016, at the beginning of the next recruiting cycles.

The NCAA calls the language about the “next recruiting cycle” ambiguous. It wants the court to establish another date, Aug. 1, 2015, when scholarships can first be offered in the 2015-16 recruiting cycle.

“Under existing NCAA rules, student-athletes in the next recruiting cycle (i.e., student-athletes who would first enroll in college in Fall 2016) may receive offer letters from colleges starting on August 1, 2015. Bylaw 13.9.2.2. NCAA seeks to confirm that the existing NCAA rules can remain in force until August 1, 2015, although we understand the injunction would not permit the NCAA to adopt or enforce rules inconsistent with the injunction on or after that date,” attorneys wrote in the filing, pointing out that is the first day schools can offer scholarships to players in the 2016-17 recruiting class.

On a second point, the NCAA contends, is Wilken’s language regarding the “licensing or use of prospective, current, or former student-athletes” could be interpreted to apply to current players.

“This has prompted concerns among colleges and universities that the injunction might, contrary to the Court’s opinion, apply immediately to current student-athletes,” the attorneys wrote. “Based on the Court’s opinion, the NCAA believes the language of Paragraph 1 refers to compensation only for student-athletes first enrolling after July 1, 2016. Otherwise the injunction would permit colleges and conferences to compensate current student-athletes before the NCAA’s member colleges have an opportunity to consider new rules consistent with the injunction.”

Attorneys wrote that they want the clarifications to ensure that there are no violations of the permanent injunction Wilken imposed, which allows players at big schools to have money generated by television contracts put into a trust fund to pay them when they leave. Wilken said the body that governs college athletics could set a cap on the money paid to athletes, as long as it allows at least \$5,000 per athlete per year of competition. Individual schools could offer less money, she said, but only if they don’t unlawfully conspire among themselves to set those amounts.

NCAA President Mark Emmert said Sunday that the governing body would appeal “at least in part” the ruling.

“We look forward to presenting our arguments on appeal, and in the meantime we will continue to champion student-athlete success on the field and in the classroom,” NCAA chief legal officer Donald Remy said in a statement released after Emmert’s announcement.

Winning on appeal could be a major challenge given the venue in Oakland, California.

Royals Get Willingham From Twins For Minor Leaguer

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — The Royals bolstered their offense Monday by acquiring outfielder Josh Willingham from the Minnesota Twins, a move the long-suffering franchise hopes will help them end a playoff drought that stretches back nearly three decades.

Kansas City had won seven straight games entering its series opener against Oakland, climbing

into the second wild-card spot and a half-game back of AL Central-leading Detroit. The Royals have not been to the postseason since 1985, when they beat St. Louis to win the World Series.

“Obviously the goal was to win with the Twins,” Willingham said from Houston, where the Twins were preparing to play the Astros. “Unfortunately, we weren’t. Now I have a chance to go help another club and

hopefully make the playoffs.”

Willingham is expected to arrive in Kansas City in time for Tuesday night’s game.

The Twins picked up minor league pitcher Jason Adam in the trade, while the Royals agreed to take on the remainder of Willingham’s contract — about \$1.8 million of the \$7 million that he was making in the final year of his three-year deal.

Willingham was hitting just .210 for the Twins this season, but his 12 homers in limited at-bats were appealing for a Royals club that has struggled to find power. The 35-year-old Willingham hit a career-best 35 homers with 110 RBIs two years ago.

“We see his presence in the middle of our lineup somewhere, and

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