

MESABI RANGE WINS MCAC FOOTBALL STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

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ST. CLOUD, Minn. - Things were looking a little bleak for the Mesabi Range football team as Vermilion was ready to score with time winding down in Saturday's Minnesota College Athletic Conference State Championship game. Shockingly, it would not be the Ironmen who would put the first and only points on the board.

Vermilion Community College fumbled on the 1-yard line and three minutes later the Norsemen had driven 99 yards for the winning score. Standout running back Khiry Robinson scored from 11 yards out with 2:52 left in the game to make it 6-0 and give Mesabi its first state title in 20 years. "We had some really, really big plays" on that long drive that culminated with just under three minutes on the clock, said Mesabi head coach Dan Lind.

That was an understatement. Robinson, who basically started and ended the drive, had one of the biggest roles in the Norse victory. After the Vermilion fumble, the Norse had to start at the 1-yard line, which became the 1-foot line on the next play.

However, Norse quarterback Ryan Akin hooked up with Robinson for 30 yards, which was later followed by an 18-yard strike to wideout Greg Moore. With the ball on the Vermilion 48, Dekeldric Felton hauled in a 37-yard pass from Akin to reach the Ironmen 11 with just three minutes to play. On the next play, Robinson sealed the victory with his 11-yard run.

Lind was impressed with Robinson, Felton, Akin and his entire squad for hanging around and winning the game. "Felton made a couple of really good catches," he said, including the 37-yarder where the freshman receiver was double covered and had to go up and get the pass. "He's really becoming a good player for us."

Felton ended the game with six catches for 172 yards, while Robinson rushed 22 times for 184 yards and the score. Akin went 13-for-33 with 255 yards passing and two interceptions. The 6-0 final score was consistent with the cold, blustery weather, tough defense and a number of turnovers by both teams, but it wasn't exactly what most had expected.

Vermilion (8-3) deploys the spread offense and defeated Central Lakes 27-26 last week to advance to the title game. Mesabi Range can also light it up and topped Minnesota West 36-34 one week ago behind the five-touchdown effort of Robinson to advance.

Lind credited his defense which has stayed in games all year long and held Vermilion to 216 total yards. Early in the year, Mesabi lost some close games, but staying close paid off in the end. "We're just like mosquitoes. We're always around."

With the win, Mesabi (7-4) does have a chance to get into a bowl game "possibly in Rochester on Nov. 22, Lind said. However, that will be determined today through a bid process, he said, and there is no guarantee the Norse will receive a bid.

Lind definitely feels they deserve one, though, after starting the season 1-3 and winning six of the last seven, including the Oct. 23 loss to Northland, which was subsequently forfeited to the Norse. "These kids have worked their tails off," he said.

Mesabi 0 0 0 6 - 6

Vermilion 0 0 0 0 - 0

First Quarter
No Scoring

Second Quarter
No Scoring

Third Quarter
No Scoring

Fourth Quarter

M - Khiry Robinson 11 run (Caleb Maki kick failed)