

## MSU Handball – A Powerhouse in the Making

Joe  
Steck

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- Men finish 2nd in Nationals
- Women finish 7th
- Team finishes 5th Over-All



By Joe Steck – Mankato Times

(All photos provided)

MANKATO, MINN. — The Minnesota State Mankato men's and women's handball teams are quickly becoming teams to be reckoned with in the handball world. The Mavericks have established themselves as what could arguably be described as an elite program.

At the most recent United States Handball Association's National Collegiate Handball tournament held in Portland, Oregon, The Maverick men's team finished 2nd in Division 1, the women's team finished 7<sup>th</sup> and the combined team finished 5<sup>th</sup>.

There were 50 teams from the United States, Ireland, and Canada competing for a team title at the UNC State campus February 19 – 23, 2015. Perennial powerhouse Lake Forest College of Chicago, Ill swept the Men's, Women's, and combined team championships.

"We finished 3rd in men's and women's last year. Getting to second is a big accomplishment," Maverick handball Coach Dr. Michael Wells said "The future looks bright for us. Lake Forest loses three of their top four players and one

of them won the whole thing.”

The Mavericks, coached by Dr. Michael Wells and John Stoffel, have built themselves up to not only compete against long established programs like the University of Texas, Illinois, Michigan State, and University of Minnesota, but also outplay them in the tournament.

Maverick freshman and Mankato West graduate Tyler Stoffel finished 9th in the Open Division defeating Michael Hedigan of University of Limerick (Ireland) by a score of 21-11, 21-14. This is the highest individual finish ever by a Minnesota State player.



Mankato West Graduate, Tyler Stoffel finished 9th in the Open Division

Other men scoring points for the Mavericks were senior Matt Job (13th), freshman Jordan Taylor (19th), senior Jerad Michels (25th), senior Cody Kutil (51st), and senior Kevin Pattain (57th).

“One of the neat accomplishments for the team is how well Matt Job did in only his 3rd college tournament,” Said Maverick coach Mike Wells “We set a goal of him finishing in top 16, and I’ll be darned if he didn’t do it.”

The Maverick women were led by Jessica Herion, who defeated the #14 seeded Cheryl Chen, of Stony Brook University, 9-21, 21-20, 11-10 to finish 13th overall.

Shannon Strand was runner up in the Women’s A Division, finishing 18th overall. She was defeated by Niamh Farrell, of Dublin City University (Ireland), 21-11, 21-5.



Other women that scored points towards the team title were Missy Kohout (25th) and Vanessa Arndt (41st).

“Jessica Herion defeated Cheryl Chen, who has been playing since she was 8,” said Coach Wells “This is only Jessica’s third year competing which makes her placement all the more impressive.”



Sharon Strand was runner up in the Women’s A Division, finishing 18th overall

Minnesota State Mankato seniors Shannon Strand and Matt Job talked about their handball experience at the University and how the sport has impacted their lives.

Strand, a Shoreview, Minnesota native major’s in biomedical science with minors in chemistry and law enforcement plans on taking some time off after she graduates and then head out west to Pacific University and become an optometrist.

Strand said she was introduced to the sport of handball through her friends.

“Two of my friends brought me to bring a woman to handball night and I liked it so I continued to play,” said Strand “I have only been playing handball three years.”

Strand had nothing but praise to say about others throughout the handball and coaching community.

“You get to know a lot of nice people in the sport,” said Strand “Our coaches are awesome and talk with you and help you with school schedules.”

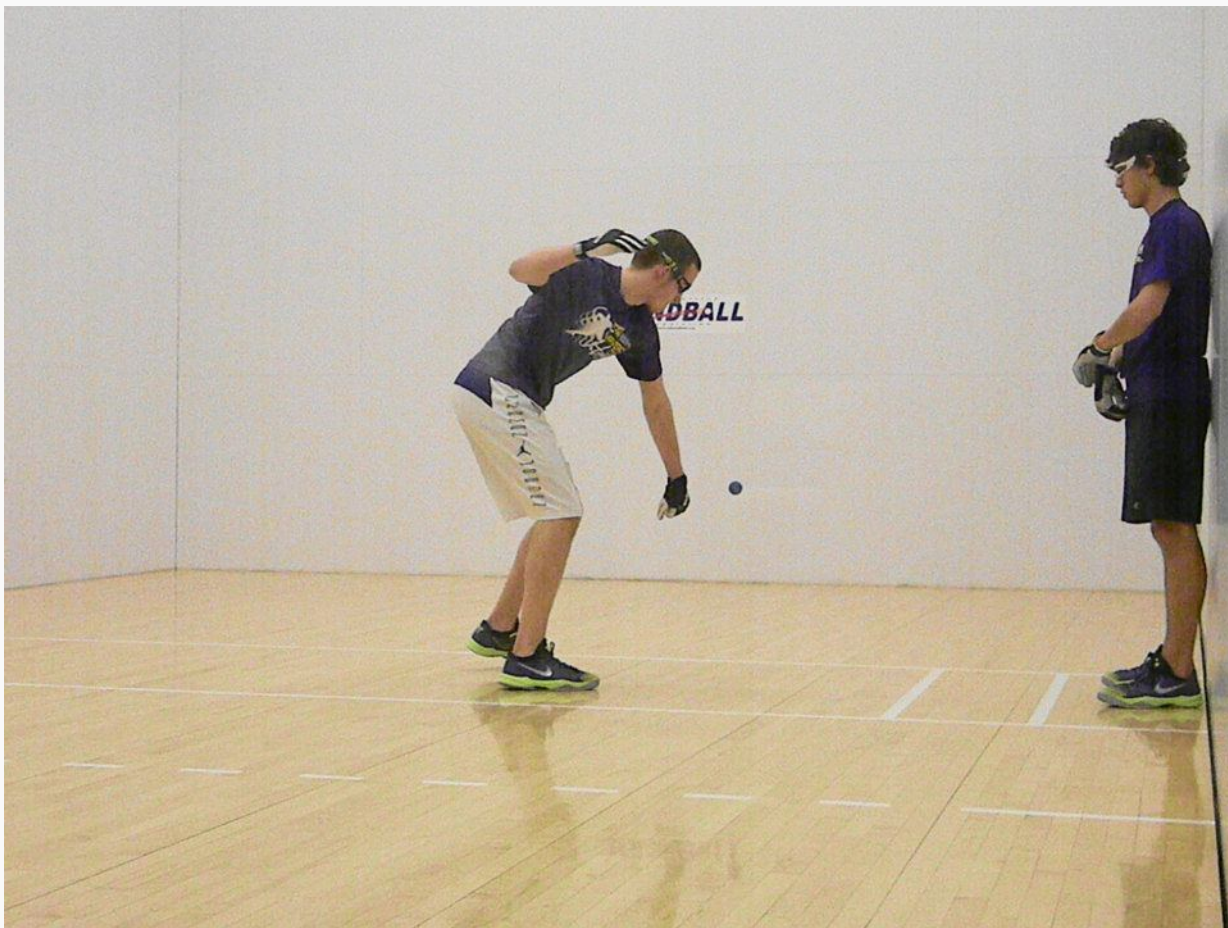
Minnesota State offers a human performance class on handball which Coach Wells uses as a secondary recruiting tool for the team. This is where Strand became hooked on the sport.

“If you like it, keep going because there are always people willing to teach,” said Strand “If people are nervous about playing, you can just ask someone on the team to show them.”

“Since this was my last year with Mankato I was trying to do well. It was awesome going all the way through Sunday,” she said “Even if you beat someone, they still come and watch you.”

Strand said she plans to keep playing handball in Portland.

“I have already met the team out there and they seem very nice,” Strand said “Playing a sport in general is fun and something to do other than study all the time.”



Matt Job finished 13th. He is now working in Mankato for Eide Bailly LLP .

Matt Job is a senior who hails from Richmond, Minnesota. He graduated in December with an Accounting and Finance degree and works for Eide Bailly LLP in Mankato.

“I started playing in the Spring of freshman year, was recruited by a person who spoke about it in a communication class. I needed human performance credit so I took the class,” said Job “Anyone can be on the team after the intro class.”

Job has played in six or seven tournaments a year since he began playing, stating he “kept practicing and playing with the coaches to improve my game.”

Job entered the tournament ranked 26th in Division A.



"I won both of my play-in matches and was bumped into top open bracket top 16 and lost first round in the open," said Job "I won my first two matches rather handily but once in the open bracket, I could notice the talent bump. I have been playing 3 ½ years versus them playing their whole life."

Job said that playing handball has changed his life.

"The sport changed my life because it will be something I will play the rest of my life," he said "Besides making me ambidextrous, it also helped me prioritize between work and school and put in time for handball."

Both Strand and Job agreed that everybody should give handball it a try.

"If they like it, they should continue with the team." Said Strand

"It is not only physical, but mental also." Added Job

Coach Wells said it will be tough losing his seniors, but he has a nice group of kids coming back as well as some new recruits.



Second Place Minnesota State Mankato men's handball team.

"Tyler Stoffel and Jordan Taylor from the state of Washington have some valuable experience and will be the nucleus of the team next year," said Coach Wells "We also hope to pick up some kids from our handball class, which has proven to be successful for our team."

While most teams have kids joining after growing up in juniors, Mankato still fills out their squads with a combination of both outside recruiting as well as through their handball class, making top placements in the National's even more impressive.

"The more we grow with our success, the more people want to come here," said Coach Wells "We had two Presidential Scholars in Tyler Stoffel and Jessica Herion, something no other school has had. We also have a player from California transferring to MSU next year."

"You can not say enough great things about this group of men and women who spent countless hours preparing for the tournament," Coach Wells said "It is nice to have something good happen."

From what the players and coaches said, handball helps them become better time managers as well as develops a lifetime sport and enhances their college experience.

Team Finals			Score
1	LAKE FOREST COLLEGE		4522
2	MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY		4229
3	UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS		4191
4	PACIFIC UNIVERSITY		3656
5	MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY	MANKATO	3631
6	TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY		3468
7	ANGELO STATE UNIVERSITY		2584
8	MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY		2416
9	UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS		2412
10	UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA		2220

Men's Finals			Score
1	LAKE FOREST COLLEGE		2293
2	MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY	MANKATO	2163
3	UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS		2084
4	MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY		2048
5	STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY		1880
6	TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY		1840
7	UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK		1799
8	UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA		1532
9	PACIFIC UNIVERSITY		1520
10	DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY		1480

Women's Finals			Scores
1	LAKE FOREST COLLEGE		2229
2	MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY		2181
3	PACIFIC UNIVERSITY		2136

4	UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS	2107
5	ANGELO STATE UNIVERSITY	1644
6	TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY	1628
7	<b>MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY      MANKATO</b>	<b>1468</b>
8	MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY	1276
9	UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS	1044
10	UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA	1004

To learn more about the Minnesota State Mankato Club Handball team [click here](#)