

SPORTS

STATE FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT



Esko makes a gang tackle on Dassel-Cokato's Eli Gillman Saturday in the Class AAA state football tournament semifinal. Gillman helped propel the Chargers into the Prep Bowl this weekend with three rushing touchdowns at U.S. Bank Stadium in Minneapolis. *Photo by Amy Arntson / Pine Knot Sports*

Eskomos hang tough in rugged loss

Dwight Cadwell
sports@PineKnotNews.com

The Eskomos' hopes of moving into the state Class AAA championship next week dwindled away down the stretch of the fourth quarter at U.S. Bank Stadium Saturday afternoon. That's when Dassel-Cokato came from behind and defeated Esko 21-14 in the State Class AAA semifinals.

Esko knew they would need to come out ready to play against the top-ranked team, and that is exactly what happened as the Eskomos exchanged punches with the Chargers and never backed down. They earned a lot of respect from fans, media and others.

The game started out as a back-and-forth defensive battle with both teams trying to establish what they wanted to do offensively, but both defenses came up big, stopping each other.

"Our coaches did a great job

coming up with a defensive game plan against the run-heavy team and it worked almost all game long, with the exception of three-to four plays," said Esko head coach Scott Arntson.

The Eskomos had a big task in trying to control the Chargers' top running back Eli Gillman, who entered the semifinals with a game average of 188 yards per game. Esko did just that for the first three-and-a-half quarters — they contained the senior running back. By the end of the first half, Gillman had only 19 yards on the ground, but he did score the first half's only touchdown on a 3-yard touchdown with 4:22 remaining in the second quarter.

Esko tried to mount a late drive in the second quarter but a fourth down and 6 situation failed, as Ty Christensen could not connect with Makoi Perich.

Continued on next page



Esko takes the field for the state semifinal game at U.S. Bank Stadium in Minneapolis. The Eskomos outgained Dassel-Cokato in offensive yardage but simply ran out of time to match a late touchdown by the Chargers. *Dan Saletel / Pine Knot News Sports*

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