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subsection title game

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Hunters find man in lake after crash

Officers unsure why Olsen was over a mile from vehicle

By Dan Nienaber
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ST. PETER — A 20-year-old Nicollet County man was found in a vehicle that rolled over at the muck of Middle Lake after apparently crashing his vehicle more than a mile away early Tuesday morning.

Several people searched an area near the intersection of Nicollet County Road 5 and Highway 111 in Nicollet County after Joshua Mark Charles Olsen's vehicle was found rolled over at about 6:45 a.m. A helicopter with a heat-seeking camera also was used to check the area between the crash and Olsen's residence

Sheriff Dave Lange.

The search was about to move east, where Olsen actually was, when two hunters called to report they had found someone in Middle Lake just before 10 a.m.

Jason Rhoten and Cory Harnitz, both of Mankato, had heard Olsen calling for help from about 8 inches of water in Wiwi Bay, said Chief Deputy Karl Jensen.



Harnitz, 23, said the pair heard a man's cries but at first figured it

was a pheasant hunter. As they saw a rescue helicopter overhead, though, they heard the man's calls again and set out looking.

They found Olsen about 15 yards into a snarl of cattails, which would have made him difficult to spot, Harnitz said.

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Harnitz turned his car-ouffage jacket inside-out and stuck it to a long pole to flag down a helicopter while Rhoten spoke with rescuers. They found Olsen from the shallow water into the boat, and they tried to get him warmed up as they drove toward the rescue helicopters, which had landed in a nearby field.

Olsen, who was suffering from what appeared to be hypothermia, was taken by helicopter to Immanuel St. Joseph's Hospital in Mankato. He received minor injuries as a result of the crash and was in fair condition Tuesday afternoon.

He was told by Olsen's friends that he had left Mankato sometime around midnight Monday. Deputies found his vehicle but not him and started the search.

Deputies were continuing to investigate the cause of the crash Tuesday afternoon, Jensen said. They didn't know how Olsen ended up in the lake about a mile and a half west of the crash location.

"We're still trying to connect the dots," Jensen said. "He's a very fortunate young man."

As for the hunters, the pair didn't bag any ducks but were glad they made the trip anyways after almost deciding not to. "Thankfully, we went out," Harnitz said.