

Sports:

Turn on the Lights: MSU-N football ready to go

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Summer isn't over. There's still time to catch some sun and have some fun before fall, and then winter returns to the Hi-Line. But the calendar has turned to August and for the Montana State University- Northern football team, it means it's time to go to work. The Lights officially report to camp on Sunday, and Northern will conduct its first practice of the year on Monday. Northern enters its sixth season under head coach Mark Samson, and in 2008, the Lights went 7-3 in the Frontier Conference and 7-3 overall. The Lights narrowly missed out on an NAIA playoff berth, but finished the season with a rousing blowout win over Montana Tech at Blue Pony Stadium back in November. Coming into the season, the Lights have finished third or better in the Frontier in each of the last four seasons, and they return 14 starters, including seven on each side of the ball. The list of starters returning for MSUN include NAIA defensive All-Americans Stetson Koffman at linebacker and Jared Weigel at defensive end. In all, MSU-N returns six all-conference players from last season, but one of the top priorities of fall camp will be finding a replacement for graduated Frontier Conference MVP Justin Moe. "We are very excited about this upcoming season," Samson said. "With a great group of returners coming back and a very good class of incoming recruits, we feel that we should have a very good 2009 season." Also for the third straight year, the Lights will enter the season ranked. Northern was tabbed as the No. 19 team in NAIA earlier this week, after finishing 22nd in the final poll of 2008. The Lights begin preparations for their Aug. 29 season-opener against the University of Calgary in Medicine Hat on Monday, and they will conduct two scrimmages this month. The first scrimmage will be Aug. 15 at 10 a.m. and the second will be held Aug. 20 at 6:30 p.m. Northern opens Frontier Conference play Sept. 5 at Carroll College in Helena, and the Lights home opener is Sept. 12 against Rocky Mountain College in Havre.