

Frontier has great players in the trenches

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Published: Tuesday, August 10th, 2010

With so many good quarterbacks and running backs in the Frontier Conference, a key to staying competitive in football games is having a good defensive line.

Last season, the Montana State University- Northern Lights played without two all-American defensive linemen, while on the other side of the coin, the Carroll College Fighting Saints had a plethora of all-conference performers on the d-line.

Most of Carroll's standouts graduated last spring, while Northern gets its defensive-end duo back for the 2010 season.

Returning to the Lights' lineup this season are star defensive ends Jared Weigel and Will Andrews. Both were all-conference ends in 2008 and Weigel earned NAIA All-American honors. Andrews has missed over a year of football due to an injured leg, and Weigel returns to the Northern lineup after not playing football a year ago. With those two back in the mix, plus some beef at defensive tackle, MSU-N should be right back to having one of the best front four's in the conference this season.

Meanwhile, the Saints graduated a pair of all-league performers in Garrett Thompson and Mike Ogrin, but they do get back all-league nose tackle Mason Siddick (6'2", 260). Siddick was a force on the line last season, and he'll be counted upon to anchor Carroll's usually- stout defensive front this fall.

Montana Tech is also very good up front when it comes to defense. Last year, the Orediggers ranked second in rushing defense, and much of that had to do with a pair of all-conference linemen.

Senior Stephen Burns (6'2", 242) returns at defensive end this season after finishing among the league leaders in sacks a year ago. Burns is joined by fellow defensive end Paul Klaboe.

Also a senior, Klaboe (6'1", 230) led the league in sacks and finished second in tackles for loss on his way to 2009 allconference honors. Tech also has the size in the middle to form a very good defensive front. With 6-foot, 273-pound Marcus Johnson playing tackle, the Orediggers will once again be very difficult to move the football against. And with a pair of great pass rushers, they should give opposing offenses plenty to think about this fall.

Eastern Oregon, which hasn't been known for its defense in recent years, will benefit from having a great pass rusher back this season. Senior Seath Kimball (6'3", 230) returns to the Mounties' defensive front after earning all-conference honors last season.

Kimball had a breakout junior year in which he finished third in the Frontier in sacks and led the league in tackles for loss. Kimball is the engine which makes the Mounties go, and if EOU's defense can stand up to the challenges it faces on the line, the Mounties could be in for a great season.

UM-Western also has a player to watch this year on the line in junior Penison Tuifua (6-0, 260). Playing in the middle, Tuifua had a strong sophomore season, finishing third in the Western defense in tackles. His stellar 2008 campaign led to all-conference honors.

Offensively, it looks like the Frontier could be very balanced this season, so a team's ability to form a solid front line on defense will be key. Putting pressure on quarterbacks like Rocky's Kasey Peters and EOU's Chris Ware is paramount, but so is stopping the run.

And with so many veteran defense linemen returning this season, moving the ball and eluding pass rushers should be a challenge for any team in the league.

Note: The [Havre Daily News](#) will be breaking down the Frontier Conference by position all week. Wednesday's HDN will feature the linebackers, Thursday the defensive backs and Friday the running backs.