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GREAT FALLS, MONTANA

Rest of Frontier swings into action today

By Tribune Staff • August 28, 2010

The Frontier Conference football season, which started Thursday night as Rocky Mountain College met Dickinson (N.D.), gets under way in earnest today with three more games.

Among them is the first conference clash of the fall, a dogfight in Dillon between the host Montana Western Bulldogs and the Montana State-Northern Lights. Kickoff is 1 p.m. at Western's Vigilante Staff.

Also slated today are two nonleague games: Eastern Oregon plays host to Southern Oregon in LeGrande, Ore., and Montana Tech plays host to South Dakota Mines in Butte. Kickoff for the latter is at 6 p.m. at Tech's Alumni Coliseum.

The Western-Northern game features the college debuts of quarterbacks Zach McRae and Derek Lear. McRae, a Dillon native who transferred to Western from Montana, is expected to start under center for the Bulldogs of coach Rich Ferris. Halfback Charlie Dotson and receiver Kahai Sevilla are key players for the Dogs, who finished 4-6 a year ago. Included were victories over Northern by scores of 27-21 and 23-13.

Lear, a former star Fairfield athlete, won the quarterback starting job for coach Mark Samson's Lights. The redshirt freshman will have several experienced ball-carriers in the backfield, including Stephen Silva and James Chandless. Matt Stuart and Orin Johnson are veteran receivers who return for the Lights, who finished 2-9 last fall.

In Butte, the Montana Tech Orediggers of veteran coach Bob Green will be looking for a measure of revenge against South Dakota Mines, which posted a 25-22 victory over in overtime when the clubs met last season. Tech finished 7-4 overall in 2009 and could be improved, thanks to the return of veterans such as quarterback Matt Komac, halfback Skyler Knuchel, and defensive ends Paul Klaboe and Stephen Burns.

South Dakota Mines, which finished 5-5 in 2009, has a veteran defense. The Hardrockers are inexperienced offensively, though, and will be led tonight by new quarterback Joe Sanchez.

Eastern Oregon is ranked 21st in the NAIA preseason poll and is coming off a 7-4 season. The Mountaineers feature quarterback Chris Ware, an All-American candidate, and will be trying to get even for a 32-28 loss at Southern Oregon a year ago.

On Thursday night, meanwhile, Rocky Mountain couldn't hold a late lead in the fourth quarter and dropped a 25-21 decision Thursday night at Dickinson State, which was ranked 18th in the NAIA preseason poll.

Frontier Conference power Carroll College, which is ranked second in the preseason poll and has won or shared the last 10 league titles, opens its season Sept. 4 against visiting Rocky Mountain.