

## Northern lights up Western

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DILLON — Freshman quarterback Derek Lear passed for 207 yards and two touchdowns in his first college start to lead the Montana State-Northern Lights to a 20-3 victory over Montana Western Saturday afternoon in a season-opening Frontier Conference game.

Lear, a former Fairfield prep star, completed 13 of 23 passes. He connected four times with Florida freshman receiver Brandon O'Brien, including TD tosses of 28 and 55 yards.

Kyle Kercher also kicked two field goals for the Lights of head coach Mark Samson.

The Lights outgained the host Bulldogs 264-253. Western quarterback Zach McRae, also a freshman, passed for 153 yards. But he was intercepted three times. The Northern defense also picked off one pass thrown by Western QB Micah Mamiya. Casey Varner, a former Baker prep star, had three of the interceptions. His brother, Tanner Varner, picked off one pass.

Mackenzie Crossley kicked a 19-yard field goal early in the second half to account for the only Western scoring.

The victory avenged two MSU-Northern losses to the Bulldogs last fall. The Lights finished 1-9 in Frontier play and 2-9 overall a year ago. Montana Western was 4-6 in league play in 2009.

Western plays at Idaho State next Saturday, while MSU-Northern has a bye week. The Lights' next game is Sept. 11 in Havre against Montana Tech.

— *Game summary, 5S*



MSU-Northern's Matt Stuart returns a punt during Saturday's Frontier Conference encounter at Vigilante Stadium in Dillon. The Lights opened their season with a 20-3 victory over the Bulldogs. (PHOTO COURTESY / MIKE BASHOR)

