Lights move the ball in first spring scrimmage

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Montana State University-Northern freshman quarterback Matt Reyant (middle) is wrapped up by defensive back Nick Griffin (right) while defensive back E'Lester Payne Queen pursues the play during MSU-N's scrimmage on Sunday afternoon in Havre. Sunday's scrum was the first of three the Lights have planned for this spring.

With good weather holding, the Montana State University-Northern football team took full advantage. In their first full scrimmage of the spring, the Lights moved the ball well on offense, made several big plays, and all-in-all had a strong first week of drills, which concluded with Sunday's scrum at the Havre High practice fields. In the situational, almost 90-minute scrimmage on Sunday afternoon, the Lights' offense scored four times and had five big plays.

The battle for starting quarterback position is underway at Northern, and freshmen Derek Lear of Fairfield and Matt Reyant of Helena both had their moments on Sunday. Lear threw a touchdown pass to junior Matt Stuart for Northern's only scoring pass of the day. Lear went an efficient 4-for-5, throwing for 80 yards and a score. Reyant was also solid, throwing for 95 yards on 4-of-7 passing. As expected, Stuart and veteran teammate Kyle Kercher led the wide receiver corps on offense. Kercher led all receivers with three catches for 75 yards, while Stuart, a returning all-conference standout, had two grabs for 31 yards and a score. Fairfield's Mick Miller also had a 30-yard catch and run, while Cut Bank's Orin Johnson had one grab for 10 yards and Missoula's Brandt Montelius had a 29-yard reception. In the backfield, the Lights put a new-look offensive line to the test, running the ball 32 times for 172 yards. Northern running backs combined for 172 yards for a 5.4 yard per carry average. Good numbers for the first scrimmage of the spring. Northern also scored twice on the ground. Fullback James Chandless scored for the Lights as did converted linebacker Justin Montelius. Montelius, seeing his first action at running back had four carries for 21 yards. Reyant led the Lights on the ground with six carries for 61 yards, while freshman speedster Stephen Silva had nine carries for 47 yards. Chandless gained 12 yards on three carries to go along with his touchdown, Johnson added 31 yard son four carries and freshmen Michael King and Josh Wilson combined for 10 yards on six carries. In all, the Lights gained 347 yards on 44 total plays for a 7.9 yard per play average. The offensive line also shined, giving up no sacks to MSU-N's stout defense over the course of the scrum. The Lights also practiced on Monday, and will take today off before going back to practice on Wednesday. Northern's next scrimmage is scheduled for April 10.