Lights make progress in first scrimmage
George Ferguson, Havre Daily News sports editor
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The weather wasn't great. In fact it hasn't been great since the Montana State University-Northern football team started spring drills. Never-the-less, the Lights got in their first scrimmage of the spring this weekend, and on both sides of the ball, they were making progress.

On Saturday morning, Northern took to a soggy and wet practice field and ran a 49-play controlled scrimmage, the first of the spring. And both the MSU-N offense, and a young Northern defense had its moments.

"Today was awesome," linebacker Jordan Van Voast said. "This is our motivation, the competition get us going and it gets us out of the gym and puts us up against the offense. It really gets us going for fall."

The Lights' offense, which returns a wealth of experienced playmakers, scored four times and gained 441 total yards of offense during the live scrimmage. Three MSU-N touchdowns came on the ground with starting tailback Stephen Silva leading the way. Silva rushed for 93 yards on seven carries, including breaking off several long runs. He scored twice.

The quarterback battle is also under way, and returnees Derek Lear and Travis Dean both got in12 pass attempts on Saturday. Lear had a huge day numbers-wise, throwing for 143 yards and a score to Brandt Montelius. He also had five carries for 57 yards and ran in a score. Dean was also impressive, going 5-of-12 for 86 yards, while Brandon O'Brien had two catches for 55 yards and one long catch and run, and newcomer Kyle Johnston had three catches for 47 yards. Montelius, one of many young Northern receivers looking to make in impact this season, also had an outstanding day with three catches for 39 yards, while MSU-N's offensive line did a stellar job, not allowing a sack in 24 pass plays.

In all, the Northern offense looked sharp despite rain a wet field and a long layoff, and one indication was the offense's whopping 9.0 yard-per-play average, which was helped by several huge plays, including a long catch and run by veteran running back Justin Montelius.

"Our running game was pretty good today and the offensive line played very well," Lear said. "Us quarterbacks still had some bad reads that we have clean up, but we showed some good things with our receivers too. They had a few drops, but really, I think the key point today was our running game."

Defensively, the Lights did good things as well.

Montana State transfer Jared Rohrback had a big day, totaling six tackles, a pass breakup and a fumble recovery. Fellow linebackers Landry See and A.J. Pasalo combined for 11 tackles, while Pasalo had a big pass breakup on a critical play. On the line, Mike Nelson and Corey Budak led the way, while Ralphal Huizar, a newcomer in the secondary had four tackles and a deflected pass, while Matt Reyant showed good things at safety.

"Overall we had a good day," Northern defensive coordinator Jake Eldridge said. "For as young as we are up front, and sometimes out-manned, there was a lot of learning that happened, through teaching and just game experience, and I believe will show up the next time out. We took steps in the right direction and just need to keep building on it as the spring continues."
The Lights continue spring drills this week with practice today and Friday. Northern will also practice at 10 a.m. on Saturday then conduct its second scrimmage of the spring on Sunday at 2 p.m.

**Scrimmage No. 1**

**Rushing** — J. Chandless 2-6, S. Silva 7-93, D. Lear 5-57, J. Montelius 3-14, T. Dean 4-20, O. Johnson 4-22. Totals: 25-212.

**Passing** — D. Lear 7-12-143, T. Dean 5-12-86.