Frontier Preview: Tight ends play key role
George Ferguson, Havre Daily News sports editor
Friday, August 5th, 2011

When it comes to tight ends in the Frontier Conference, two words come to mind the last few seasons – Bubba Bartlett.

The most productive tight end in not just Carroll College’s recent run, but in the NAIA the last four seasons, Bartlett has now followed the man he was most compared to, former Saint great Casey Fitzsimmons to the NFL.

And with Bartlett gone to the Houston Texans, the race for who the best tight end in the Frontier is on, and there are some good ones.

Here’s a look at the top returning tight ends in the Frontier in 2011.

At MSU-Northern, the tight end position is extremely important, not just in blocking and protection situations, but in key pass plays, and especially close to the goal line. And the Lights believe they have a star on the rise in 6-2, 240-pound sophomore Brian Torgerson. The Helena native became a steady part of the Lights’ offense as a freshman, and he’s got plenty of room to grow, as this will be only his second season of college of football.

If not for Bartlett at Carroll however, Eastern Oregon’s Dillon Bedford would have easily been considered the best tight end in all of NAIA football a year ago. And he’s certainly getting that kind of praise as he enters his junior season. Bedford earned all-american honors a year ago, and at 6-4 and 230 pounds, he’s not just big, but athletic, has great hands and has a rare combination of power and speed. Last season, Bedford caught 15 balls for over 300 yards and three scores, but he also averaged a whopping 17 yards per catch.

Montana Tech is also excited about its tight end prospects, mainly due to the increased play of junior Brandon Boltz. Liked Bedford, Boltz has great size, but also possesses receiver-like speed, and as a star at Butte High, Boltz is now looking to move up the ranks of past great Oredigger tight ends.

But when it comes to tight ends in the league, the question is, who will replace Bartlett at Carroll? The tight end position is a huge part of the Carroll offense, and with former greats like Fitzsimmons and Bartlett, there’s big shoes to fill in Helena.

Sophomore Cole Coba (6-3, 240) is one player the Saints are high on, and his pass-catching ability has been noticed by many. But Carroll has a couple more tight ends who will vie for playing time in junior Anthony Hogan and junior Ben Heidenreich, who is a huge presence at 6-6 and 250 pounds. But whoever steps into the role this season will certainly have his hands full with all of the amazing things Bartlett did.