Lights look sharp in scrimmage
George Ferguson, Havre Daily News
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Veteran running back Stephen Silva summed up the attitude of the Montana State University-Northern football team following the Lights’ five-series scrimmage Thursday night in Havre.

“It’s been electrifying around here,” Silva said. “Everyone comes to practice with a great attitude, everyone comes to work every day fired up. This team is electrifying.”

That word could also sum up Northern’s short, but efficient scrimmage Thursday night at the MSU-Northern practice fields – a scrimmage in which Silva was dominant and the MSU-N offense registered two scores against a fire-up Lights’ defense.

“I thought it went really well,” Northern head coach Mark Samson said. “The guys are a little tired, a little banged up, so we kept things short tonight. And it went really smooth. It was a real clean scrimmage with no turnovers and very few penalties. I was really pleased with both sides of the ball tonight.”

The MSU-N offense got things started when Derek Lear hit a streaking Brandt Montelius for a 50-yard score on the first series of the night. That was it for Lear for the evening, but backup quarterback Travis Dean led the offense to back-to-back Juan Garcia field goals and a one-yard TD run by fullback James Chandless.

Silva was the workhorse for the Northern offense on Thursday night, registering three different first-down runs as well as breaking off a beautiful 25-yard scamper which set up Chandless’ TD run. Dean also connected earlier in the night with Brandon O’Brien, who made a great 40-yard run down the sidelines.

“I thought our offense looked really good,” Silva said. “I think we’ve been really sharp the last two weeks. We’re clicking on all cylinders right now, and we can’t wait to get out there next Saturday against Western.”

The Lights’ defense also their moments on Thursday night. Northern forced a punt on the second series of the night and held the offense to the two Garcia field goals. Will Andrews, Jordan Van Voast and Johnny Figueroa also had sacks in the scrum, while Chris Hamilton continued to impress by breaking up a long Dean pass intended for O’Brien.

“I thought we executed really well on both sides of the ball,” Samson said. “Our defensive line really got after it tonight. They really come at you hard, so that was good to see.”

The scrimmage marked the end of 12 days of an intense training camp for MSU-N. Northern will essentially get most of Friday and all of Saturday off before returning to the practice field on Sunday to start preparing for next Saturday’s season opener against UM-Western.

“Practice has been really, really good,” Silva said. “Everyone has done well. We’ve worked really hard and the attitude on this team has been great. It’s been very exciting.”
Lights notes: Garcia, a junior college kicker from California made two field goals from 30 yards, one from 35 and one from 40 yards out. The final 40-yarder was nailed while the entire Northern roster stood behind him trying to distract him with plenty of noise. Starting wide receiver Orin Johnson sat out the scrimmage but will be ready to go next week, as did starting offensive lineman Joe Pittman. The Lights will return to practice on Sunday evening, but the two-a-day portion of fall camp is now over.