Montana State-Northern 35, Rocky Mountain 32
Saturday, September 24, 2011

BILLINGS -- Quarterback Derek Lear and tailback Stephen Silva combined for 474 yards of offense and four touchdowns as visiting Montana State-Northern picked apart No. 17-ranked Rocky Mountain College 35-32 in the 90-degree heat on Herb Klindt Field.

The mobile Lear, using the play-action pass to perfection, completed 20 of 25 passes for 232 yards and three touchdowns. The sophomore from Fairfield also rushed for 44 yards.

Silva, quick and shifty, certainly did his part, too, adding 181 rushing yards on 28 carries and tacking on a touchdown as the Lights improved to 3-1 in the Frontier Conference.

In beating Rocky, which dropped to 2-2 in conference and 3-2 overall, Northern also methodically converted on 12 of 17 third-down attempts, including two for touchdowns.

Lear, with his arm and legs, had a hand in 11 of those conversions.

In a contest that was tied at 14-14 and 21-21, Northern went ahead for keeps 28-21 with 7:55 left in the third quarter following a 4-yard touchdown pass from Lear to Justin Montelius.

The nine-play, 81-yard drive included 49 rushing yards from the 5-foot-9, 185-pound Silva and 30 yards passing by the 5-11, 190-pound Lear, including a pivotal 11-yard pass to Orin Johnson on a third-and-four play.

Rocky closed to within 28-24 on a 37-yard field goal by Nick Knell with 14:50 left in the fourth quarter, but Northern, as usual, had a quick response.

The Lights drove 84 yards on 10 plays, with Silva breaking loose for 54 yards on the first play of the march. In the end, on a third-and goal from the 11, Lear rolled out and found Johnson open in the end zone to make it 35-24 with 9:35 remaining.

Rocky added a touchdown in the final seconds on a 15-yard scoring toss from Bryce Baker to Nevin Blankenship. That score was set up by a 65-yard hook-and-lateral play involving Baker, Jake St. John and AJ Tolbert.

Northern finished with 515 yards on offense, while Rocky ended up with 307.

Rocky received 213 passing yards and two touchdowns from quarterback Bryce Baker.
Levi Sutton and Blankenship had TD receptions. Tolbert wound up with eight receptions for 103 yards.

Eric Buer, a sophomore defensive back, provided a second-quarter highlight for the Bears by returning a kickoff 98 yards and pulling Rocky into a 14-14 tie.

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