Mountaineers turn away Lights, again
EOU leaves Northern searching in Oregon
George Ferguson
Sunday, October 30th, 2011

The Montana State University-Northern football team will now have to wait a while to get a coveted win in LaGrande, Ore.

With schedule changes coming to an expanded Frontier Conference next season, Saturday’s trip to Oregon might have been Northern’s last chance to beat the Mountaineers on their home field for some time to come.

But it wasn’t to be.

On Saturday afternoon at Community Stadium, the No. 25 Mounties rode 28 unanswered first-half points to a Frontier Conference victory and a season sweep of the Lights for the third straight year.

It was also Senior Day at EOU and star quarterback Chris Ware went out with a bang. Ware threw for 297 yards and four touchdowns against the Lights. His last home game of his remarkable career also featured an efficient 21-of-29 performance with no interceptions, as well a whopping 84 yards rushing. Ware’s huge day included a three-yard run for a score with one minute left in the third quarter, which gave EOU a commanding 28-0 halftime lead.

Ware hasn’t lost to the Lights in three seasons, and this year alone, he threw eight touchdowns, ran for two and had no picks in two games against the Lights.

But it wasn’t just Ware’s playmaking that did Northern in. MSU-N struggled to get going offensively in the first half, while EOU opened with a nine-yard TD reception from Abraham Naway. EOU tacked on two more scores early in the second, with Ware completing a nice catch and run to Naway that went for 61 yards, and senior running back Kevin Sampson scoring on a 20-yard run.

Northern’s defense started to control things better in the second half, and the Lights did limit Sampson, the Frontier’s second-leading rusher to just 67 yards on 18 carries. MSU-N also got going offensively in the third quarter, when the Lights put up their only two scores of the day.

Derek Lear hit Orin Johnson for a four-yard touchdown with seven minutes left in the third to make the score 28-7, and Justin Montelius busted off a nice 24-yard run to the house just before the quarter came to an end. However, Ware answered MSU-N’s first score with a 16-yard strike to Jake Burroughs to make it 35-7, and he opened the fourth stanza with a seven-yard pass to Gary Cole to make up the final margin.

Ware was, as usual a major difference with both his arm and his feet. He also completed passes to 10 different receivers. But the EOU defense deserved some credit too. The Mounties held the Lights almost 100 yards below their season average on offense. Northern gained 260 total yards while EOU picked up nearly 500. EOU also sacked Lear five times and Kyle Kerfoot had an interception.

Lear finished the game with 189 yards and one score, but Northern’s Stephen Silva did have another big day. Silva went over 100 yards for the sixth time this season as he shredded the EOU defense for 128 yards on just 17 carries. He also caught two balls for 20 yards. Johnson had four catches for 20 yards and a TD, while Kyle Johnston had three catches for 53 yards. Defensively, Landry See had a huge game in his home state. See finished with 15 tackles, one sack and two tackles for loss. Matt Reyant added seven tackles.
The loss at EOU meant the Lights haven’t beaten the Mounties since they earned a 24-7 victory in Havre back in Sept. of 2008. And the Lights haven’t won in LaGrande since 2007. The loss also dropped Northern back to .500 as the Lights (4-4) wrapped up their road schedule.

The Lights will return to Havre for their final two games of the season, including a Friday night matchup with the Rocky Mountain College Battlin’ Bears. Friday’s game kicks off at 7 p.m. at Blue Pony Stadium.

Eastern Oregon 41, Lights 14
MSU-Northern 0 0 14 0 — 14
Eastern Oregon 7 21 6 7 — 41

First Quarter
EO — Abraham Naway 9 pass from Chris Ware (Luis Ortiz kick), 9:48

Second Quarter
EO — Kevin Sampson 20 run (Ortiz kick), 13:08
EO — Naway 61 pass from Ware (Ortiz kick), 9:22
EO — Ware 3 run (Ortiz kick), 1:00

Third Quarter
MSU-N — Orin Johnson 4 pass from Derek Lear (Juan Garcia kick), 6:40
EO — Jake Burroughs 16 pass from Ware (kick failed ), 4:12
MSU-N — Justin Montelius 24 run (Garcia kick), 1:11

Fourth Quarter
EO — Gary Cole 7 pass from Ware (Ortiz kick), 11:04

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INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING — Northern, Stephen Silva 17-128, Lear 12-2, James Chandless 3-13, Montelius 2-27, Johnson 2-1. Eastern, Sampson 18-67, Ware 12-84, Matt Orthman 5-16, Team 1-(-1).

PASSING — Northern, Lear 18-31-1-189. Northern, Ware 21-29-0-297. Burroughs 0-1-0-0.