George Ferguson Column: Night games too cold for reporters, not for the Lights
From the Fringe...
George Ferguson
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I'm not going to lie, I for one was cold while I was roaming the sidelines Friday night at Blue Pony Stadium.

Night football games in November in Montana usually mean you can see your breath, runny noses and watery eyes and I had all of that as the MSU-Northern Lights took on the Rocky Mountain College Battlin Bears. In fact, thanks to me being a scatter-brained idiot sometimes and leaving my down North Face vest at a tennis tournament last spring, I was ill-prepared for just how cold it was on Friday night.

But as chilly as I was, I was also excited. November football is exciting, cold weather games are how the game was meant to be played and most of all, the Lights gave me and their fans plenty of things to enjoy despite the temperatures.

Northern just seems to play well under the lights, and they may have played their best-ever night game in Friday’s 24-0 shutout win.

The Northern defense made Rocky look almost inept on offense – and that’s no small task considering the Bears have been one of the top offensive teams in the NAIA under Brian Armstrong. It was clear that though Rocky is a very physical team, the Bears weren’t quite up to the hard-hitting Lights’ defenders were dishing out. And dropped passes by good receivers is usually another sign that a defense is dominating and the cold is getting to an offense. All of those things were evident Friday night.

The defense got the crowd into the game, and though it was probably the smallest Northern crowd of the year, it might have been one of the loudest, at least in key situations. So kudos should definitely go out to the souls who braved the cold air.

Northern’s offense was clicking too. The Lights’ offense boasts plenty of players who understand cold weather in places like north central Montana. Derek Lear at Fairfield, Orin Johnson at Cut Bank, Zeb Olson at Malta, Brian Torgerson at Helena, Brock Hyder from Boise and so many more players have all braved plenty of cold weather games in their high school career and Friday night didn’t seem to bother them one bit. And even Northern’s players who weren’t from cold weather backgrounds seemed to embrace the Friday night atmosphere, as guys like Jorge Magana and Stephen Silva and the rest of the MSU-N offense was just more physical than the Bears Friday night and teams who dominate physically usually win games.

And the Lights' offense sure didn't seem to mind playing in the cold air because they seemingly were on the field all night. Northern's four scores came on drives of eight, 14, 13 and 16 plays.

Even Northern kicker Juan Garcia, who hails from Pacifica, Calif., not exactly a cold weather spot, was unphased.

Garcia booted a solid 39-yard field goal with a cold ball and split the uprights with plenty to spare, giving Northern points on their first drive of the game. It was especially impressive because it’s doubtful Garcia has had to kick too many times in temperatures under 30 degrees.

I guess there’s a reason Northern is unbeaten in night games, and 3-0 in games played at Blue Pony Stadium under the lights in November. They aren’t afraid of the circumstances. Instead, they embrace it, they have fun with it and the result is a dominating performance like the 24-0 blanking of the Bears Friday night.
And while my fingers are still numb two days later, thanks to the Lights’ dominance after dark, cold weather night games continue to be a lot of fun — even for me.