Lights picked second by league coaches
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Coming into the 2011 Frontier Conference football season, the Montana State University-Northern football team wasn’t picked to contend for a conference championship in the preseason coaches poll.

The buildup to the 2012 season is an entirely different story.

Over the weekend, the Frontier Conference released its 2012 Preseason Coaches Poll, and to no one’s surprise, the Carroll College Saints are picked to capture the league title. Carroll is gunning for its 12th straight league championship, and the Saints advanced to the NAIA national championship game last December.

But picked right behind the Saints are the Lights, who finished 2011 with a 5-5 record and a solo third-place finish in the final conference standings. Northern earned 35 points in the coaches poll, while the Saints had 49 in a poll voted on by the eight league coaches. Coaches are not allowed to vote for their own teams in the poll.

Northern’s high pick is due to the fact the Lights were one of the top offensive teams in the league last season, and the Lights return seven starters on that side of the ball, including five all-conference picks from last season. Overall, the Lights, who open the season on Aug. 24 against the Saints in Havre, return 16 starters from a year ago.

Coming in one point behind the Lights is Eastern Oregon, which finished second in the Frontier last year. The Mountaineers earned 35 points in the poll. Rocky Mountain College was picked fourth with 28 points, followed by new Frontier member Southern Oregon.

Montana Tech was picked sixth, followed by another new league member, Dickinson State in seventh and UM-Western in eighth.

The Lights began fall camp with their first practice on Sunday night.

2012 Frontier Conference Preseason Coaches Football Poll

1. Carroll College  49
2. MSU-Northern  36
3. Eastern Oregon  35
4. Rocky Mountain  28
5. Southern Oregon  25
6. Montana Tech  21
7. Dickinson State  16
8. UM-Western  13