Tech holds off Lights
George Ferguson
Sunday, October 28th, 2012

Early in the season, the Montana State University-Northern Lights lost back-to-back road games by less than a touchdown. If the Lights had found a way to win both of those games, the 2012 campaign would be looking a lot different right now.

On Saturday afternoon at Alumni Coliseum in Butte, a close loss haunted Northern yet again.

MSU-N was driving for a potential game-tying touchdown Saturday at No. 8 Montana Tech, but Derek Lear was intercepted by Tech’s Nathan Kobold, which sealed a 21-13 win for the Orediggers and up their winning streak to seven games. On the other side of the coin, the loss was MSU-N’s third in a row, and it’s the second time this season the Lights, 2-6, have suffered three straight setbacks.

The day wasn’t without its bright spots for the struggling Lights as the MSU-N defense, which has been battered by Southern Oregon’s passing attack and Carroll College’s run game the last two weeks, rose to the occasion and held Tech scoreless for the final 30 minutes of the game. Tech came in averaging over 30 points per outing, and the Diggers’ got on the board early in the first quarter when Nick Baker hit Trent Thomas on a 15-yard scoring strike.

But for much of the day, the Lights answered the call defensively.

Tech scored on back-to-back possessions in the second quarter, first on a Zach Kinney 8-yard catch from Baker, then on a Pat Hansen 2-yard run. The second TD gave the Diggers’ a 21-3 lead as Northern had just one Trevor Baum field goal up to that point.

But the Lights put a strong drive together in the final minute of the first half, and helped out their defense by tacking on a 33-yard Baum field goal just before the half expired.

From there, MSU-N’s defense played lights out, limiting the Diggers’ to no points and only seven first downs in the second half. However, Tech’s defense was also up to the task. The Diggers’ limited the Lights to just 306 total yards on the day, in what turned out to be a defensive struggle.

In all, the two teams went the first 23 minutes of the second half without putting any points on the board. But MSU-N finally got back into the contest when Lear hit Kyle Johnston for a 17-yard touchdown with just over four minutes left in the game. The score, which was aided by a great catch and run by Orin Johnson, who missed last week’s game with a staff infection, pulled the Lights to within eight points at 21-13.

Northern’s defense then did a great job to get the ball back one more time, and the Lights started a march which included a fourth-and-nine conversion by Lear and Brandon O’Brien. But in Tech territory, a Lear pass was tipped and then picked off by Kobold, essentially ending the Lights’ chance at a comeback.

Offensively, Tech’s defense did an outstanding job of keeping Northern out of scoring opportunities. Lear finished the game 23-of-42 for 207 yards, with one TD and two interceptions. Johnson had eight catches
for 79 yards and O’Brien grabbed five balls for 42 yards. Tech held Stephen Silva down to just 31 yards on nine carries, though the Lights did rush for 99 yards. Johnson added 34 yards on the ground.

The win was Tech’s seventh straight and with Carroll’s loss at SOU Saturday, the Diggers’ have sole possession of first place in the Frontier Conference with two games to go. Tech hosts UM-Western this Saturday before finishing the season at SOU.

The Lights will look to regroup in their final home game of the season. Northern hosts Dickinson State Saturday at 12 p.m. at the Blue Pony Stadium.

Montana Tech 21, Lights 13

Northern  3  3  0 7--13
Tech       7 14 0 0--21

First Quarter
MT — Trent Thomas 15 pass from Nick Baker (Matt Berg kick), 10:46
Northern — Treavor Baum 29 field goal, 3:44

Second Quarter
MT — Zack Kinney 8 pass from Baker (Berg kick), 14:55
MT — Pat Hansen 2 run (Beg kick), 7:38
Northern — Baum 33 field goal, :06

Fourth Quarter
Northern — Kyle Johnson 17 pass from Derek Lear (Baum kick), 4:17

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MSU-N</th>
<th>MT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Downs</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rushes-Yards</td>
<td>46-99</td>
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<td>19-37-1</td>
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<td>Penalties</td>
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<td>3-21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
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Individual stats


RECEIVING — MSU-Northern, Johnson 8-79, Brandon O’Brien 5-42, Johnston 4-33, Justin Montelius 2-17, Brian Torgerson 2-16, Mick Miller 1--15, David Wilson 1-5. Tech, Thomas 6-65, James Robert 2-36, Kevin Moss 2-32, Kinney 4-31, Craig Halko 3-29, Hansen 1-6, Rowe 1-1.

Frontier Conference Standings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conf. W-L</th>
<th>All W-L</th>
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<tr>
<td>Montana Tech</td>
<td>7-1   7-1</td>
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</table>
Southern Oregon  6-2  6-2
Carroll          6-2  6-3
Eastern Oregon   4-4  4-4
Rocky Mountain   3-5  4-5
UM-Western       3-5  3-5
MSU-Northern     2-6  2-6
Dickinson State  1-7  2-7

**Saturday**
Montana Tech 21, MSU-Northern 13
Southern Oregon 52, Carroll 49
UM-Western 23, Rocky Mountain 20
Eastern Oregon 14, Dickinson State 0

**Saturday, Nov. 3**
MSU-Northern vs Dickinson State
Carroll at Rocky Mountain
Southern Oregon at Eastern Oregon
UM-Western at Montana Tech