Youth grid camp adds to Lights’ progress
Big turnout for MSU-N football camp

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As the Montana State University-Northern Lights football team continues its march toward the upcoming season, the program also continues to make its mark in the community.

Football is undoubtedly one of the most popular sports in the United States, and kids fall in love with the game at a very young age. Knowing this, the Lights make it a priority to do their part with young football players from all over the Hi-Line and surrounding areas with their annual football camp. Athletes from grades K-4 have been meeting in the mornings, while grades 5-8 have been meeting in the afternoons. Nearly 100 kids attended the camp this past week at the campus of MSU-N.

“We had a great turnout,” Northern assistant head coach/offensive coordinator Kyle Samson said. “Actually, probably the best we have had in the last five or so years. The thing I am mostly impressed with though, especially with the older kids, is their participation, and their ability to hear what the coaches say and do it. They are competing hard and working hard. And the fact that we are inside instead of outside, the kids are doing a great job, the younger kids, too.”

Unfortunately, the rain left the Northern practice field too soggy and muddy to practice on at the beginning of the camp. But the campers made do in the Lights’ wrestling room, and their love of the game made it a very easy hurdle to get over.

And like every year, techniques are stressed as the annual camp. The players are briefed on offense and defense, as well as areas like form tackling, and route running. And it doesn’t matter if a kid is a beginner, or on their way to being a seasoned veteran, the drills are broken down to hit home with each and every kid.

“We try to hit every position on offense and defense,” Samson said. “As well as the fundamentals. We try to give any new kids the base fundamentals, and for more experienced kids, we are just trying to take what they know and correct their technique, and just help them get better.”

But the camp doesn’t just prepare the young area players; it also gears up the Lights for their season that is just around the corner.

Football is football, and a handful of coaches, and current players also volunteer their time to help coach the camp. And while it is still early, the exposure to football really gets things rolling for the Lights’ players, and coaches especially. MSU-N has a lot of returning players, as well as new recruits, and transfer players. Wanting to continue to build toward a Frontier Conference, and NAIA title, Samson can’t wait to bring in all of the components and begin a new season.
“I think that every year we do this camp,” Samson said. “It is re-energizing on why we coach football. I love coaching college kids, but we get to get back to the basics and have fun with these kids that are out here running around and love the game. Their excitement for the game energizes me, and really gets me geared up for our season.

“We are having a great summer,” Samson added. “We had a lot of guys stick around this summer, the most we have probably had, and we have kids who have moved up here this summer to work out. We are really excited about our potential, and we can’t wait for everybody to be here so we can put things together and get going.”

Northern practice is just around the corner, but the Lights will open their season Aug. 29, when they travel to Dickinson State.