The offensive line is one of, if not the most, unsung positions in football. Many times, the big guys up front just don’t get the credit they deserve.

But when it comes to the Frontier Conference, stand-out offensive linemen are nothing new. It seems every season, more than one team has a strong, big and talented offensive line.

The 2012 season was no exception to that rule, and that was indicative of the 2013 Frontier All-Conference team, as over half of the lineman which made the team were experienced seniors.

But graduation didn’t hit the lines that hard, and this season will once again feature many great offensive linemen around the league.

That includes Montana State University-Northern Lights, who return a pair of key linemen from last season, and have also added several key transfers to the unit. And Patrick Kiser, a red-shirt in 2012 will be a welcome addition to the Lights’ offensive line.

Back for the Lights this season are a pair of road graders in 6-3, 275-pound senior Rostyn Pace and 6-6, 295-pound sophomore Dylan Murphy. Both were full-time starters a year ago, while Pace, a former star at Sunburst, will be starting for the third straight season on what should be a much-improved Lights’ offensive line.

Around the League

Carroll College has been known for great offensive lines throughout head coach Mike Van Diest’s tenure, and though three-time NAIA All-American Connor Goudreau graduated last spring, and despite Carroll struggling at times with an inexperienced offensive line last fall, the Saints should be back to their powerful ways up front this season.

Carroll returns a Frontier Second-Team All-Conference performer Ryan Armstrong (6-0, 285). Armstrong started as a freshman last season, and should be an even better player this fall. He’s also joined by a pair of holdovers in the monstrous Levi Coughlin (6-6, 300), as well as junior center Alex Castens (6-2, 276). Castens has the potential to be one of the best centers in the Frontier this season.

Rocky Mountain College has also built a strong offensive line in recent times, and the Battlin’ Bears should have a stout one this season. Sonny Ahkui, a 6-3, 300-pound senior is already a two-time Frontier All-Conference performer and is widely considered one of the top returning linemen in the league. Fellow senior Neal Coon (6-1, 280) is also making his third straight season starting with the Bears, and is another experienced giant up front.
Teams as productive as Southern Oregon was last season on offense couldn’t have put up all those numbers without a stout offensive line. And amazingly, the Red Raiders were young up front last season. Back for SOU is First-Team All-Conference standout in junior Drew Gibson (6-6, 250), while sophomore Max Proudfit (6-2, 280) is a returning starter and is blossoming into an outstanding tackle.

Perhaps the only other teams to lose an All-American lineman besides Carroll was Eastern Oregon and Dickinson State. The Mountaineers saw two-time All-American Will Hunter depart this past spring, but they have a good one in senior Jared Van Beek (6-3, 273), though EOU will look to rebuild most of its line. DSU lost 6-8, 330-pound Carl Dynnson to graduation, and the Blue Hawks will have to find a big replacement for him in their triple-option attack. There are plenty of unknowns on UM-Western’s line this season as well. Junior Nick Brown (6-1, 275) returns after an All-Conference campaign from a year ago, but the rest of the Western line may be up for grabs this fall.

Meanwhile, Montana Tech isn’t rebuilding its line, and the Orediggers should be very good up front again this season. Once a proud tradition at Tech, the offensive line fell off four a couple of years, but came back strong last season, especially behind the play of then-senior Keith Mullan, an All-Conference performer.

But even without Mullan, and fellow All-Conference performer David Tapia Padron in the lineup, Tech should be fine up front. The Orediggers return three-year starter Mack Ferko (6-1, 295), while junior Ben Cook (6-3, 255) should be ready to step into a full-time starting role and help anchor Tech’s offensive front, and its high-powered offense.

Editor’s Notes: Most heights and weights for players listed in this story were taken from 2012 rosters or 2013 spring rosters. Over the next three weeks, the Havre Daily News will break down the top players in the Frontier Conference by position. For a look at the top defensive lineman in the league, see Friday’s Havre Daily News.