In some ways, it feels like fall is already here. And in just 20 days, the Montana State University-Northern football team will play its season-opening game at Dickinson State University.

And the Lights, who went 3-7 in the Frontier Conference a year ago, will begin preparing for that Aug. 29 night game against DSU with their first practice Sunday at 10:30 a.m. at the MSU-Northern practice fields.

Northern players report to fall camp today, and MSU-N will begin two-a-day practices Sunday with a 10:30 a.m. and a 6:45 p.m. practice scheduled. The Lights will practice twice each day this coming week, including their first full pads practice Monday evening. And by the time Saturday rolls around, the Lights, under veteran head coach Mark Samson, will have had 12 practices in already, and will conduct their first scrimmage of camp, which will be held at 10 a.m. Saturday.

The Lights will continue two practices per day, through Aug. 21, and they will hold their second full scrum of the camp on Aug. 22. From there, Northern will go into game-week mode, preparing for the Blue Hawks.

MSU-N comes into fall camp with plenty of familiar faces, including senior quarterback Derek Lear and senior wide receiver Orin Johnson on offense. The offensive line also returns stars Dylan Murphy and Rostyn Pace, while transfer linemen, running backs and wide receivers can help add to MSU-N’s firepower. The Lights return three starters in the defensive secondary, including All-Conference safety Josh Baum, as well as three-year starting linebacker Jordan Van Voast.

MSU-N was picked to finish fifth in the Frontier by the league’s coaches at last Tuesday’s Frontier Conference Media Day in Great Falls. After the Lights open the season at Dickinson State, they’ll travel to Carroll College Sept. 7. Their home opener is slated for Sept. 14 against Eastern Oregon. Northern will celebrate homecoming the following week against the Blue Hawks. The Lights’ other home games are Oct. 26 against Carroll, Nov. 2 against Montana Tech and Nov. 16 against Rocky Mountain College.