When it comes to special teams on the football field, often times games are won or lost on a big kick, or a sensational kickoff or punt return. It seems to happen time and time again.

Special teams also play a key role in field position, whether it’s a punter who can boot it long, or a returner whose speed makes him a threat to take one to the house each time he touches the ball.

This coming season, like so many seasons past, the Frontier Conference has those types of special teams players.

And so do the Montana State University-Northern Lights. MSU-N does have to replace a four-year kick returner in running back Stephen Silva, but the Lights have plenty of exciting playmakers to fill that role.

Veterans Orin Johnson and Trevor Baum have plenty of experience returning kickoffs and punts for the Lights, while a pair of newcomers will also give MSU-N’s return game a big spark this season. The ultra-fast Lavorick Williams could be a game-changer returning kicks this season, as could redshirt-freshman Dylan Woodhall, who is also speedy and shifty in the open field.

The Lights also have a solid punter back in Baum, who is playing multiple positions for MSU-N. Baum finished the 2012 season averaging around 40 yards per punt, and with a season of kicking under his belt, he could be one of the best punters in the league in 2013.

Baum also handled the placekicking duties for the Lights a year ago, but MSU-N brought in a full-time kicker for the new season. Jordan Rueschhoff, a 6-1, 185-pound transfer from Glendale Community College in Arizona, should provide the Lights with a powerful leg, as well as some deeper field goal kicking opportunities.

The Frontier Conference graduated some great returners and some great kickers from a season ago, but there’s still plenty of weapons around the league.

In the return game, Eastern Oregon senior Kedrick Starr has earned Frontier All-Conference honors as a punt and kick returner in each of the last two seasons. Starr and teammate Chris McGinnis-Parker create one of the fastest and most dangerous return duos in the entire conference.

Rocky Mountain College’s Eric Buer is another former All-Conference standout back for his senior season, while UM-Western’s Josh Lords finished in the top four in the Frontier in both kickoff returns and punt returns a season ago. Carroll College’s Jared Mayernik is also a dangerous return man, and he’ll be one to watch this season.

In the kicking game, Montana Tech returns First-Team All-Conference punter Travis Farewell, while sophomore Matt Berg could be one of the rising stars to watch with field goals this season. Eastern
Oregon’s Paul Blakely was a Second-Team All-Conference punter a season ago, while the likes of Carroll, Southern Oregon, Rocky and EOU all must break in brand new place kickers this season.

Editor’s Note: For continued Frontier Conference preview stories, see Thursday’s Havre Daily News for a look at the league’s eight head coaches. The HDN will also preview all eight stadiums in the Frontier Conference on Friday.