It’s hot out, and it’s full on summer right now. But while most people, especially young people, are enjoying the sunshine, the lake and other summer activities, for the Montana State University-Northern football team, it’s time to go to work.

Starting this afternoon, the Lights begin 2014 fall camp, in preparation for their 2014 Frontier Conference opener against Montana Tech Aug. 30.

Northern players reported to camp Wednesday, but the real work begins today on the MSU-Northern practice fields as the Lights conduct their first full practice of the season. Today at 2:30, Northern will go helmets only, but 11th-year head coach Mark Samson won’t wait long to start putting his team through the grind of fall camp.

Saturday will mark the first day of two-a-days as Northern will go to a morning practice and an evening practice. The Lights will only practice once on Sunday afternoon, but will go back to two-a-days starting next week, with their first full pads practice scheduled for Monday morning.

The Lights, who return the likes of quarterback Travis Dean, running back Zach McKinley, wide receiver Jake Messerly, the multi-talented Trevor Baum, a strong offensive line, defensive end Tyler Craig and safety Hunter Chandler, will conduct several scrimmages before their season opener as well. Northern’s first scrimmage of fall camp is scheduled for Aug. 16 at 10 a.m.

MSU-N will continue with a routine of two-a-day practices every other day through Aug. 24, then the final week of fall camp will be used to prepare for the Montana Orediggers, who the Lights will face Aug. 30 at Alumni Coliseum in Butte. Northern went 4-6 a year ago, suffering a heartbreaking home loss to the Diggers in November. Tech was 3-7 a season ago.

“We’re excited to get started,” Samson, who has several new coaches on his staff this season said. “I thought our offseason went really well, but now it’s time to go to work. It’s time to see what we can do and how far we’ve come.”

Following Northern’s opener at Tech, the Lights will be home for back-to-back games in September. MSU-N hosts Dickinson State in a nonconference game Sept. 6 and remains at Blue Pony Stadium to battle Rocky Mountain College Sept. 13. The Lights are back at home Sept. 27 to face Southern Oregon, while they also play at home Oct. 18 against Tech, Nov. 1 against Carroll College and Nov. 8 against UM-Western.

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