Bad Dawgs: Western 60, Northern 15
Western spoils MSU-N’s home finale with a dominant performance
By George Ferguson
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Emotions were running high on a beautiful November day in Havre. After all, it was senior day for the Montana State University-Northern Lights, and what has already been an emotional season, meant that Saturday’s home finale against the UM-Western Bulldogs was going to be extra special.

But somebody forgot to tell that to Western.

From the start, the Bulldogs, playing in their regular season finale, were dominant, and by game’s end, they finished off a 60-15 thrashing of the Lights, who suffered their third straight loss.

“I think they (Bulldogs) played extremely well,” said Northern interim head coach Jake Eldridge. “They came out and did what they wanted to do, and what we knew they wanted to. But they basically out-played us in every phase of the game. They executed really well all day long, and we didn’t have an answer for it.”

It was in fact, the second time this season the Dawgs, who capped off a winning season with Saturday’s victory in Havre, did whatever they wanted against the Northern defense. Western, which beat MSU-N 50-30 back in September in Dillon, racked up more than 600 yards of offense, and nearly 400 on the ground. The win gave Western a 6-4 finish in Frontier Conference play, and a 6-5 overall record, while the Lights dipped to 2-8 overall and 1-8 in league play.

“I’m very proud of this team, proud of our nine seniors, who stuck it out, some through three coaches,” said Western head coach B.J. Robertson. “Things didn’t always go their way, and they had higher goals when the season started, but once those goals weren’t attainable anymore, these guys refocused. They wanted to have a winning season, and they were able to accomplish that with this win. So I’m extremely proud of this team.”

And Robertson had to be proud of his team for the way it played on Saturday. The Dawgs were nearly flawless in spoiling Northern’s senior day, and it started early on.

Despite missing a 49-yard field goal on its opening drive, Western dominated the time of possession in the first period, and with 5:25 left in the quarter, the Bulldogs finally cashed in with a three-yard Sam Rutherford touchdown.

From there, the flood gates opened wide.

After a three-and-out by the MSU-N offense, which registered just two first downs in the first 15 minutes, Western struck again when Tyler Hulse drilled a 30-yard pass to Beau Brekke to put the Dawgs up 14-0. Western’s defense forced another three-and-out, and two plays later Hulse did the exact same thing, only this time, he hit George Sherwood from 30 yards away, and the Bulldogs were out to a 21-0 lead.

But they weren’t done.
Rutherford capped off a nearly five-minute drive with a four-yard TD run, and less than two minutes later, the Dawgs went ahead 31-0 when Connor Greth nailed a 41-yard field goal. The Bulldogs then capped the 38 unanswered first-half points with a 15-yard TD run by Hulse just before the end of the first half.

It was a dominating performance by the Bulldogs, and one that was set up by great defense and great field position. Northern mustered just 48 yards of offense in the first half, while freshman quarterback Jess Krahn was sacked four times. Three bad punts by the Lights also set the Bulldogs up with field position in Northern territory, and they capitalized on all three miscues.

“Compliments to our defense, setting us up with great field position,” Robertson said. “Northern’s defense took away our run game early. But our defense kept giving us the ball back, and with great field position, and we were able to get our running game going. So it was a cycle that just kept repeating itself. The defense getting stops and giving the offense great field position, and then the offense taking advantage of it. So it was great team football all day long.”

**Long Senior Day**

**Lights are 2-8 overall and 1-8 in the Frontier; Next Up: at Rocky Mountain**

Lights Notes: For the first time all season, Craig, the sophomore from Great Falls, was held without a sack. He still has 10 sacks, which leads the Frontier. Rutherford's 111 yards allowed him to break UM-W's single-season record. He now has 1,061 yards in 2014. McKinley was held out of the endzone for only the fourth time in his 20 career games as a Light. The Northern defense has now surrendered 185 points in its last 12 quarters of football.

Montana State University-Northern senior defensive back Mike McCrary, left, tackles UM-Western's Dylan Kramer during Saturday's Frontier Conference football game at Blue Pony Stadium. Luoma was one of 14 Lights' seniors honored before the game, which didn't go well as Western rolled to a 60-15 victory, and a season sweep of the Lights.
MSU-Northern running back Zach McKinley tries to break a tackle during Saturday's Frontier Conference game between the Lights and UM-Western Bulldogs at Blue Pony Stadium.

MSU-N quarterback Jess Krahn fires a pass during Saturday's game against UM-Western.

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