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MSU-N men ranked to start the season
Lights tabbed 15th in NAIA Preseason Men’s Basketball Poll
George Ferguson
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The Montana State University-Northern Lights are already 4-1 early in the 2011-12 basketball season. Now, the Lights can add the No. 15 ranking in the NAIA to their list as the season starts to heat up.

The NAIA Top 25 Men’s Basketball Preseason Coaches Poll was released recently and the Lights will start the year ranked 15th. Northern finished as the No. 19 in the final NAIA poll last spring after the Lights won a Frontier Conference championship and advanced to the first round of the NAIA national tournament.

Northern, which was picked to win the Frontier title this season, is only one of two Frontier Conference teams ranked to start the season. Carroll College sits at No. 23 in the first poll. The Saints also went to the national tourney a year ago and finished as the No. 22 in last season’s final poll. UM-Western, which too went to the big dance last season, received 12 votes in the preseason poll, while Westminster College received three votes.

Defending NAIA national champion Pikesville of Kentucky starts the year as the No. 1 team in the country. Other than the other Frontier teams which are rated, the Lights don’t have any games scheduled against current Top 25 teams.

On the women’s side, Frontier Conference powerhouse Lewis-Clark State begins the year ranked No. 5. Westminster starts the year ranked No. 9, while Carroll and Rocky Mountain College received votes in the NAIA Women’s Preseason Coaches Poll.

The first regular season men’s and women’s polls will be released Dec. 5.

The Lights return to the floor this Thursday with a three-game road trip to Oregon. The MSU-Northern Skylights are back in action on Monday when they travel to Missoula to take on the University of Montana Lady Griz.

NAIA Preseason Men's Top 25

1. Pikeville (Ky) 300
2. Mountain State (W. Va) 295
3. Robert Morris 293
4. Concordia (Calif) 288
5. Martin Methodist 268
6. LSU Shreveport 255
7. Oklahoma Baptist 254
8. Georgetown (Ky) 240
9. Azusa Pacific 233
10. Texas Wesleyan 223
11. Rogers State 202
12. Shorter (Ga) 188
13. Tougaloo (Miss) 185
14. Columbia (Mo) 166
15. Biola 158
15. MSU-Northern 158
17. St. Catherine (Ky) 149
18. Southern Nazarene 141
19. Evangel (Mo) 132
20. Southern Poly (Ga) 121
21. Xavier (La) 94
22. Union (Tenn) 88
23. Carroll 75
24. Saint Xavier (Ill) 66
25. Fresno Pacific 63

Others receiving votes: Park (Mo.) 55; Lee (Tenn.) 45; MidAmerica Nazarene (Kan.) 33; Mobile (Ala.) 31; Oklahoma Christian 26; Campbellsville (Ky.) 24; Our Lady of the Lake (Texas) 22; Freed-Hardeman (Tenn.) 21; Life (Ga.) 16; Montana Western 12; Westminster (Utah) 3.

NAIA Women’s Preseason Top 25

1. Azusa Pacific 312
2. Union (Tenn) 202
3. Oklahoma City 290
4. Shawnee State 280
5. Lewis-Clark State 266
6. Freed-Hardeman 248
6. Bethel (Tenn) 248
8. Campbellsville (KY) 234
9. Westminster 222
10. Vanguard 221
11. Southern Nazarene 220
12. Olivet Nazarene (Ill) 202
13. Saint Xavier (Ill) 179
14. Lindsey Wilson 175
15. Lee (Tenn) 174
16. Xavier (La) 166
17. Lubbock Christian 158
18. Columbia (Mo) 157
19. Langston (Okla) 152
20. Westmont (Calif) 124
21. Shorter (Ga) 110
22. Evangel (Mo) 85
23. William Woods 77
24. Rogers State (Okla) 72
25. Belhaven (Miss) 58

Others receiving votes: The Master's (Calif.) 57; Carroll (Mont.) 39; Cumberlands (Ky.) 26; Southern Poly (Ga.) 22; Robert Morris (Ill.) 18; Avila (Mo.) 15; Point Loma Nazarene (Calif.) 11; Texas Wesleyan 10; Southern-New Orleans (La.) 9; Loyola (La.) 7; Wayland Baptist (Texas) 5; (Ark.) 4; Biola (Calif.) 3; Voorhees (S.C.) 1; Rocky Mountain (Mont.) 1; Benedictine (Kan.) 1; Georgetown (Ky.) 1.