

Frontier Conference Basketball Preview 2012: Top Men's Post Players

It will be a physical Frontier men's season

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At the NAIA level, it's tough to find a top-notch post player. Let's face it, 6-10, 250-pound monsters aren't a dime a dozen at this level of basketball.

Never-the-less, the Frontier Conference has plenty of good forwards and centers on the men's side and the coming weeks will certainly showcase that.

One of the best in the league resides at MSU-Northern, and while senior Joe Simpson stands just 6-4, he's an absolute force for the Lights. Simpson averaged 18 points and 11 rebounds during Northern's final 12 games of 2011, earning him First Team Frontier All-Conference honors. Simpson is also a tenacious defender and one of the best rebounders in the league. He's averaging 10 points and six rebounds so far this season and he'll once again be one of the top post players this winter.

Here's a look at the top forwards and centers around the rest of the Frontier Conference this season.

There are good forwards all over the Frontier Conference but the trio at Westminster is hard to match. The Griffins return 6-4 junior Jake Orchard, who is one of the most dynamic players in the Frontier. Orchard is a returning all-american who averages 16 points per game while shooting 43 percent from the 3-point-line. Despite being undersized, Orchard plays big and can defend much bigger opponents.

The Griffins also return 6-6 senior Tanner Gregory, another big who can go outside, but this year, they welcomed back former Frontier Player of the Year Ben Walker (6-7, Sr.) Walker missed last season with an injury but returns this year looking to once again dominate in the paint. Healthy again, Walker is averaging 13 points and six rebounds per outing.

UM-Western also has a trio in the paint, led by 6-5 senior Tyler Hurley. A guard-forward hybrid, Hurley can do it all, including run the point if need be. He's a deadly shooter but will mix it up in the paint as well. He's averaging 13 points and six rebounds and shoots 43 percent from three. Kyle Perry (6-9, Sr.) and College of Idaho transfer Jake Owsley (6-8, So.) give the Bulldogs a big presence in the middle.

When talking about forwards, you can't look any further than Carroll College. Andy Garland (6-5, Sr.) is back for his final season in Helena. He's a three-time NAIA All-American and a former Frontier Player of the Year. Garland is averaging 16 points and seven rebounds this season, and has a career average of 18 points and nine rebounds during his brilliant stay at Carroll.

Garland has help around him too. Tony Dalton (6-6, Sr.) averages 10 points per game, and veteran Chase Godecke (6-8, Sr.) helps give Carroll one of the most formidable front lines in the league.

Rocky Mountain College is in good shape in the middle too with three good ones. Senior Matt Fogarty (6-7) leads the team in scoring and is flanked by two dominant centers. Joel Barndt, a 6-9 sophomore has emerged as a force in the paint this season, averaging 12 points and a Frontier best nine rebounds per game. Sergio Trocha (6-9, Sr.) averages 10 points and seven boards for the Bears and was one of the top shot blockers in the NAIA last season.



MSU-Northern senior Joe Simpson is one of the top forwards in the Frontier Conference, despite being just 6-4. Simpson is a tenacious defender and rebounder for the Lights. For a look at the top guards in the league, see Wednesday's Havre Daily News.

The Great Falls Argos have perhaps the most athletic forward in the league with the return of 6-6 senior L.J. Jones. A two-time all-conference performer, Jones is a versatile scorer, a great rebounder and an outstanding defender. Jones is averaging 10 points per game so far this season and is getting help on the boards from 6-8 senior Ken Anderson.

The LC State Warriors have added a strong inside game this season, led by 6-6 junior transfer P.J. Bolte. Bolte came to LC from Highline Community College and has been instant offense for the Warriors. Bolte is averaging 16 points and seven rebounds per game during LC's strong start to the season.

Note: For a look at the top guards in the Frontier, see Wednesday's Havre Daily News.