

Frontier Conference Basketball Preview 2012: Top Men's Guards

Frontier men house elite guards

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If you like fast breaks and 3-point shooting, then men's basketball in the Frontier Conference is certainly for you.

The league has always featured great guard play, whether it be point guards who can get up and down the floor and make scintillating passes, or whether it's deadly 3-point bombers. As a conference, the Frontier always puts players in the top of the NAIA in scoring, 3-point shooting and free-throw shooting and the 2012 season should be no different.

There are many great guards in the league this season, and several teams with more than one great guard. One of those teams is the Montana State University-Northern Lights, the defending Frontier Conference champions. The Lights return four premier guards from last year's team, all of whom should be mentioned as some of the best guards in the league.

Seniors Shaun Tatarka, David Maddock and LaVon Myers, along with junior Devin Jackson make the Lights perhaps the most perimeter-oriented team in the conference, as well one of the most deadly shooting teams in all of NAIA basketball. Jackson is a returning First-Team All-Conference performer and an explosive scorer. He averages 12 points per game this season and shoots 33 percent from three. He's also a dynamic player who can put the ball on the floor and attack the rim. Tatarka and Myers were also all-conference selections a year ago. Tatarka averages 13 points per game and shoots 36 percent from three and 89 percent from the foul line. Myers has taken on more of a point guard role for the Lights this season, but still averages nine points per game and is a dangerous outside shooter. Maddock comes off the bench for the Lights, but he may be the top 3-point shooter in the league at 47 percent. Maddock has been stellar so far this season averaging just over 11 points per outing.



Here's a look at the top guards around the rest of the Frontier Conference.

When the word guard is mentioned in association with the Frontier, you have to start with UM-Western senior Brando Brown (5-10). As a junior, Brown led the Frontier in scoring, assists and steals on his way to NAIA First-Team All-American honors and Frontier Player of the Year accolades. Brown is as good as it gets in the NAIA with his shooting, ball handling, speed and his ability to he's putting up huge numbers, averaging 23 points, four assists and three steals for the Bulldogs.

The emergence of UGF as a Frontier power this year has a lot to do with guard play. The Argos returned two starters in Melvin Williams (6-2, Sr.) and Marcel Towns (6-2, So.), who together average 23 points per game. Towns is a lightning quick point guard and the addition of 6-1, senior Leon Sutton has made the Argos into one of the best backcourts in the conference.

Carroll College is loaded in the backcourt as well. Byago Diouf (6-3, Sr.), the 2010 Frontier Defensive Player of the Year is back, averaging nine points and seven boards per game, but the Saints also get great contributions from 6-4 sophomore Nick Jones and 5-11 junior Be Cutler.

Westminster has as good a front court as there is in the NAIA this season, but the Griffins can also play on the perimeter. And running the show is 5-10, senior point guard A.J. Reilly. Reilly is a two-year starter who averages eight points per game and shoots nearly 40 percent from beyond the arc.

Montana Tech and Rocky Mountain College have great point guards too.

The Orediggers are led by Tyree Haynie. The 5-9 senior is a talented passer who gets up and down the floor quickly, but he can also score from the outside and get to the paint. Haynie averages 11 points per game and also dishes out three assists per this season. A.J. Paine (6-3) is also an outstanding shooter returning for the Orediggers. The Battlin' Bear return point guard Anthony Carter has great awareness to go along with top-end speed. Carter was second in the Frontier in steals a year ago with 1.5 assists and two steals per game.

Lewis-Clark State graduated a slew of quality guards over the last few seasons, but the Warriors have found a good one in 6-3 senior Darin Stewart. Stewart is averaging 10 points per game, and is shooting at a high clip from the outside. But his size and athleticism also makes him a tough one to defend.

Note: For a team-by-team breakdown of the Frontier Conference men, see Thursday's Havre Daily News.