Frontier Notebook: MSU-N's Devin Jackson honored
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The Frontier Conference men’s and women’s basketball seasons have been barn burners from the start. Now, everything comes down to two final games.

The Frontier regular season men’s title will come down to the last weekend of the season, while the women’s title is all but sewn up.

On the men’s side, UM-Western will try and hold off MSU-Northern and claim a share of its second regular season title in the last three years. Western comes into its final games at Carroll College and Rocky Mountain College with a 9-3 league mark, and a one game lead over the Lights. One Western win, or one loss by the Lights would lock up home-court advantage throughout the playoffs for the Bulldogs.

However, neither Western, nor Northern will have an easy time of it this weekend. While the bulldogs visit RMC on Thursday night, the Lights (8-4) will be in Salt Lake City to play Westminster, a team Northern has never beaten on the road. Depending on how things shake out Thursday night, the regular season championship could be decided in Helena and Lewiston, Idaho on Saturday. The Bulldogs close out the regular season at Carroll, while the Lights do the same at surging LC State.

The men’s playoff picture is still very clouded. The Griffins are just one game behind the Lights for third, while Carroll and UGF are at 6-6. LC State could get to 7-7 this week and finish as high as fourth with two wins, while RMC and Montana Tech will be on the road for the first round regardless of what either team does this weekend.

The women’s picture is a little more clear, though not everything is a done deal.

With their sweep of LC State this season, the Griffins have locked up a fourth straight Frontier regular season championship and will host throughout the women’s playoffs. The Warriors are alone in second at 10-2 and can finish no worse than third.

And third place is where things get interesting. With Northern’s dismantling of RMC last Friday in Havre, the Skylights are in a position to steal third place away from the Bears. Both teams are at 7-5 in league play. However, it won’t be easy for Northern, which has to finish the season at Westminster and LC State, while Rocky is at home to face Western and Tech.

Still, the Skylights can finish no worse than fourth which means they’ll be home for a first-round playoff game Feb. 29. Ties will also have to be broken this weekend as Western and Tech are tied for fifth going into the final two games, each at 4-8, while Carroll and UGF are tied for last at 3-9.

Player of the Week

The MSU-Northern men snapped a three-game losing streak with two thrilling wins at home last weekend. And though Northern honored its eight seniors over the two games against RMC and Carroll, it was junior Devin Jackson who exploded.

Jackson earned Frontier Men’s Player of the Week honors after scoring 23 points and hitting seven 3-pointers Saturday against the Saints, as well as scoring a game-high 21 the night before against RMC. Jackson averaged 22 points, four rebounds and 1.5 assists per game. He was 16-of-25 from the field for 62 percent including 16-of-26 in 3-point field goals for 53 percent.
Westminster’s Dana Bates was the women’s player of the week.

Rankings

There are only two more NAIA Coaches Polls left this season, and it will be interesting to see how things shake out. In this week’s men’s poll, the Lights didn’t budge and are still ranked No. 22 in the NAIA. Western ascended one spot this week to No. 14, the highest ranking the Bulldogs have achieved in over a decade. Westminster received vote again this week.

On the women’s side, LC State dropped out of the Top 10 for the first time this season after losing to Westminster on Saturday night. The Warriors are No. 13, while the Griffins moved up to spots to No. 16. After a home sweep, the Skylights received one vote.

To the finish line

Scoring titles are also on the line this weekend as teams wrap up the regular season. Western’s Brandon Brown looks to have the men’s scoring title locked up as he goes into the last two games averaging 21 points per night. However, Andy Garland’s 32-point performance in Havre last season pushed his season average to 19 points per game. Westminster’s Jake Orchard and LCSC’s P.J. Bolte both average 15, while Northern’s Shaun Tatarka is ninth in the league at 13 points per game.

Brown also leads the league in assists at 5 per game, while RMC’s Sergio Trocha leads the league in rebounding at boards per night.

On the women’s side, LCSC’s Jasmine Stohr looks to win the scoring title for the third time in three years. Stohr is averaging a league-best 19 points per game, while Western’s Hayley Pettit is second at 16 points per game. MSU-N’s Laramie Schwenke is third in the Frontier in scoring at 15 points per outing.

Pettit will finish the regular season averaging a tremendous double-double. Not only is she averaging 16 points per game, but also a whopping 12 rebounds per outing. Western teammate Alecia Wilson leads the Frontier in assists at five per night.