Lights to face Columbia Cougars
George Ferguson
Thursday, March 8th, 2012

The Montana State University-Northern men's basketball team will go into the NAIA national tournament un-seeded, despite winning a school-record 27 games and capturing the Frontier's regular season and postseason championships for a second straight year.

And now the No. 18 Lights (27-6) know who they'll face next week in Kansas City, and when.

The brackets for the 2012 national tournament were released Wednesday night with Northern paired up against No. 15 seed Columbia College of Missouri. The Lights and Cougars will square off at 7:45 p.m. M.S.T. next Wednesday night.

The Cougars are 26-6, ranked No. 15 in the last NAIA Coaches Poll and champions of the American Midwest Conference. Columbia has been to 15 NAIA national tournaments, while the Lights are making their six appearance, second in a row and third in the last four seasons. Northern and Columbia have never met and the Lights and Cougars have no common opponents this season.

The Cougars are led by 6-8 junior forward Jordan Dressler, a transfer from NCAA Division I Toledo. Dressler averages 15 points per game and led the AMC in rebounding, pulling down over nine boards per game. Sophomore guard Devin Griffins (6-0) averages 12 points per game and 6-0 senior guard Henrique Mederios averages 10 points per outing and is the team's top 3-point shooter. The Cougars are coached by Bob Burchard, who's been at the helm in Columbia for 23 seasons.

The Lights, who beat UM-Western in Monday night's Frontier Conference championship game, are in the bottom quarter of the 32-team field. The winner of the Northern-Columbia game will face either No. 2 seed Oklahoma City or Bellhaven of Mississippi in the quarterfinals on Friday night. Western gained an at-large berth to the national tournament and faces No. 13 seed John Brown University of Arkansas in the first round on Thursday afternoon. The No. 1 overall seed in the tournament is Shorter College of Georgia. Robert Morris is seeded third and Concordia of California is seeded fourth.

Northern and Western were the only two Frontier teams to reach the NAIA national tournament. According to the final poll, Westminster was either the first or second team left out of the field of 32. The Sooner Athletic Conference and the Golden State Athletic Conference each got three teams in, the most of any conference in the NAIA Division I.

The Lights will depart for Kansas City from Billings on Monday. Stay tuned to the Havre Daily News for complete coverage, all the way through Northern's game against Columbia on Wednesday night. Tomorrow's HDN will feature the Frontier Men's and Women's All-Conference teams.
2012 Buffalo Funds-NAIA Division I Men's Basketball National Championship

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1 Shorter (Ga.) (31-2)
   Wednesday, 10:45 a.m.
   Life (Ga.) (19-14)
   Texas Wesleyan (25-7)
   Wednesday, 12:30 p.m.
   16 Point Loma Nazarene (Calif.) (20-6)
   9 Rogers State (Okla.) (22-8)
   Wednesday, 9 a.m.
   Tougalo (Miss.) (25-8)
   Evangel (Mo.) (23-9)
   Wednesday, 2:15 p.m.
   8 Lindsey Wilson (Ky.) (21-9)

5 Southern Poly (Ga.) (24-6)
   Thursday, 10:45 a.m.
   Cumberland (Ky.) (20-11)
   Thursday, 9 a.m.
   Xavier (La.) (23-8)
   Tuesday, 9 a.m.
   12 LSU Shreveport (La.) (25-7)
   13 John Brown (Ark.) (24-8)
   Thursday, 2:15 p.m.
   Montana Western (24-9)
   Oklahoma Christian (20-12)
   Thursday, 12:30 p.m.
   4 Concordia (Calif.) (26-7)

3 Robert Morris (Ill.) (27-4)
   Thursday, 9:45 p.m.
   Southern-New Orleans (La.) (17-13)
   Lee (Tenn.) (20-8)
   Thursday, 8 p.m.
   14 Georgetown (Ky.) (24-8)

11 Mountain State (W.Va.) (23-8)
   Thursday, 6:15 p.m.
   MidAmerica Nazarene (Kan.) (25-5)
   Southern Nazarene (Okla.) (22-10)
   Thursday, 4:30 p.m.
   6 Martin Methodist (Tenn.) (27-6)

7 Our Lady of the Lake (Texas) (26-7)
   Wednesday, 6:15 p.m.
   Baker (Kan.) (21-11)
   Campbellsville (Ky.) (21-11)
   Wednesday, 4:30 p.m.
   10 Biola (Calif.) (25-8)

15 Columbia (Mo.) (26-6)
   Wednesday, 8:45 p.m.
   Montana State-Northern (27-6)
   Belhaven (Miss.) (16-16)
   Wednesday, 10:30 p.m.
   2 Oklahoma Baptist (28-4)

All times CST. The first 30 games will be video-streamed by NeuLion via NAIA.org. The Championship final will be televised live nationally on CBS Sports Network.