Lights touted third, Skylights sixth in hoops
By George Ferguson
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The Frontier Conference men’s and women’s basketball seasons don’t fully begin until January. But the conference released its 2013-14 preseason honors late last week.

The Montana State University-Northern men are picked to finish third this season by the league’s coaches, while the MSU-N women were tabbed sixth.

On the men’s side, Northern received 45 votes, finishing behind UM-Western and defending Frontier tournament champion Rocky Mountain College. Defending regular season champion Lewis-Clark State and perennial power Westminster College round out the top five. Northern finished third in the Frontier’s regular season a year ago and lost to the Bulldogs in the Frontier semifinals. Reigning Frontier Player of the Year Marcel Towns of Great Falls was tabbed Preseason Player of the Year.

On the women’s side, league coaches favor the Westminster Griffins to capture what would be their sixth straight Frontier championship. Carroll, a national tourney team from a year ago, was voted second, followed by Western. LC State and Montana Tech tied fourth while the Skylights, who finished fourth a year ago, and reached the Frontier semifinals, received 29 votes in the poll. Western junior Sammi Bignell was named Preseason Player of the Year.

Frontier Conference Men’s Preseason Coaches Poll

1. UM-Western 63
2. Rocky Mountain 54
3. MSU-Northern 45
4. Lewis-Clark State 43
5. Westminster 41
6. Great Falls 33
7. Montana Tech 22
8. Carroll College 14
9. Dickinson State 9

Men’s Preseason Player of the Year:
Marcel Towns, University of Great Falls, 6-2, senior guard

Men's Preseason All-Conference Team
Joel Barndt, Rocky Mountain, 6-9, senior forward; Jacob Champoux, Lewis-Clark State, 6-0, senior guard; Adam Greger, Montana Tech, 6-6, junior guard/forward; Jeremy Nicolas, Rocky Mountain, 6-6, senior forward; Jake Owsley, Montana Western, 6-8, senior post.

Frontier Conference Women’s Preseason Coaches Poll
1. Westminster 62
2. Carroll College 58
3. UM-Western 40
4. Lewis-Clark State 38
4. Montana Tech 38
6. MSU-Northern 29
7. Great Falls 27
8. Rocky Mountain 22
9. Dickinson State 10

**Women's Preseason Player of the Year:**
Sammi Bignell, Montana Western, 5-10, senior guard

**Women's Preseason All-Conference Team**
Kelsey DeWit, Montana Tech, 6-2, senior post; Erin Legel, University of Great Falls, 5-5, sophomore guard; Mandy Machinal, Montana Tech, 5-7, junior guard; Tia Pappas, Westminster College, 5-7, junior guard; Kelsi Wells, Westminster College, 5-9, junior.