"When I was choosing where to go to school, there were a lot of factors that played into it," Pearson, who’s averaged 10 points and five rebounds per game over his four-year career with the Lights, said. "But coming from Big Sandy was a big part of why I chose Northern. I’ve always been part of a family that’s very close. We are a very tight family. My grandparents were there, my dad, everybody, so it just made sense for me to stay close to home so everybody could see me play, and we could continue to be the close family that we are."

The Pearson clan is indeed tight. And through Corbin’s four years of high school, they watched as the 6-6 star athlete helped the Pioneers rise to Class C fame. The town of Havre saw it, too, as each and every February of his high school career, Pearson was able to play Saturday night at the 9C tournament — something that every Hi-Line basketball player covets.

Now, five years removed from high school, the town of Havre is still watching Pearson play. He’s been a rock solid player for the Lights since his red-shirt freshman year, and he’s already a two-time Frontier All-Conference performer, who will be a three-timer by the time this season is over. And, while he didn’t foresee it when he chose to sign with head coach Shawn Huse and the Lights after the Pioneers won the 2010 Class C state title, Havre is another reason why Pearson says his decision to attend Northern was the right one for him, and for his family.

“I’ve realized in my time at Northern, that Havre is just like Big Sandy,” Pearson said. “Just like when you play sports in Big Sandy, the community support here in Havre is unbelievable. I will never be able to thank the people of Havre and the fans of Northern enough for what they’ve done for me and what they do for our team. Our fans, and the people here are the best there is. Kyle (Leeds) isn’t lying when he announces
before every game that the (Armory) is home to the finest fans in the Frontier (Conference). It’s so true. The community support here, and the support I’ve been given throughout my career, it’s just incredible.”

And Pearson’s run with the Lights has been incredible. Since he started playing for real, the Lights have gone to three straight NAIA national tournaments, and have won 20 or more games in each of his first three seasons at MSU-N. He’s had the ultimate highs in team success at Northern, and he’s achieved great personal success as well.

“I’ve been blessed, both in high school, and at Northern, to always have great teammates, great players to play with and great coaches,” Pearson said. “I’ve been able to accomplish a lot for myself, but what I feel the most is how lucky I am to have played with so many great guys and to have played for such great coaches. Those are relationships and friendships I’ll have forever, and that’s what I’ll always remember the most, more than the wins or the personal success I’ve had.”

“We have always felt extremely fortunate that he picked us and how he thought everything through,” Huse said. “He was one of the highest touted recruits in our state his senior year. He had made a great name for himself among college coaches through the work he did in summer basketball … particularly in the country’s largest compilation of tournaments (Las Vegas). He played great against some great national competition. He chose us for the right reasons … family, degree (business), fantastic support, and great, consistent basketball tradition. He made it clear that he was impressed with our consistency in recruiting him, and the level that our basketball program was at … and that he wanted to help take us to another level, and he has certainly accomplished that.

“He and his families presence at every MSU-Northern function will be missed,” Huse continued. “Their enthusiastic presence at almost every game we have played the past four years has been outstanding and greatly appreciated by our players and coaches alike. And not just home games, they have been everywhere from deep in the heart of Canada clear down to Arizona. Heck, Robin (Pearson) has been there to help us with two bus breakdowns. Talk about a team of Northern supporters.”

And Pearson’s family is a big part of what has made his time at Northern so special. He said that now that his time as a Light is winding down, he’s started to really realize all he’s been through and what he’s achieved, and having his family there to see it all has meant more to him than most people could ever imagine.

“It’s hard to put into words,” he said. “But basically, it’s been a great ride, and my family has been there through it all and that’s very special. I have so many people come to watch me play, and at this point, when I step on the court, I just know they’re all there watching and supporting me. That has really helped me a lot through the years, because playing college basketball at a four-year university is tough. It’s a long way from basketball at the Class C level.

“My dad has been telling me a lot this season, knowing it’s my last, how proud of me he is because of how hard it is to play at this level. He’s kind of been reminding just how much I’ve put into this journey and how special it all has been,” he continued. “So, to be able to play basketball in the Frontier Conference, and at Northern, and have that kind of support the whole time, it’s meant everything to me.”

There’s something else that means a lot to Pearson — the fact that he’s playing college basketball at Northern shows what hard work and dedication can do, and it’s also a shining example for young basketball players all over, but particularly those from across the Hi-Line as they ascend on Havre for the 9C tourny this week. Pearson, alongside current Montana State senior Blake Brumwell, was a four-time Class C All-State performer for the Pioneers and one of their all-time leading scorers.

He has carried that torch right up U.S. Highway 87 to Havre and to the Armory Gymnasium.

“It was amazing to have the success I had in high school,” Pearson said. “And I have to say, we (Pioneers) and especially myself, wouldn’t have had any of that success without Blake (Brumwell). None of what we did in those years would have been possible without him. He’s a great basketball player and a great friend.

“But now, to be here at Northern, having the success I’ve had in the Frontier Conference, I really hope that does show the kids from Class C schools and 9C schools that they can do it, too,” he said. “I’ve always wanted to show that if you’re willing to work hard enough, you can go to a four-year university and have
success playing basketball, and it doesn’t matter what the size of the school you played at in high school was.

“'I'm proud that I played Class C basketball,’ Pearson added. 'I'm proud that I played for Big Sandy. I'm proud that I played in the 9C. And ever since I got to Northern, I always wanted to make sure I showed the kids that come watch us play that they can do it, too. They just have to work hard every day and believe in themselves. I feel like I've worked really hard to get to where I'm at today, and the kids that play basketball in the 9C, they can do it, too.’

And while Pearson is long since removed from his own days at the 9C tournament, his basketball career with the Lights isn’t quite over.

Playing on a relatively new team this season, the Lights struggled early in conference play, but with Pearson’s leadership and veteran, hard-nosed play, they have rallied as of late and are still in the thick of the Frontier Conference race. And that’s why the former Pioneer great, a legend of the District 9C, and the ultimate team and family man, isn’t ready to completely look back and start remembering his career.

But his head coach certainly can.

“Corbin is a winner. Period,” Huse said. “And most importantly, he is the true definition of a team player that knows the point of everything we do as coaches is to push the team into becoming great. And he is instrumental in pushing his teammates, and keeping them on point with our day-to-day rules. He is great at helping the teammates get that everything we do on and off the court, helps the snowball roll in a direction that leads to successful game nights for the Lights.

“Ultimately, he will go down as one of the greatest five-year MSU-Northern forwards ever. In my mind, he is the best in that category,” Huse continued. “It has been a great process watching him go from a watch-and-learn redshirt to a captain and team leader, especially these past two seasons. Corbin has played with many teammates of varying abilities, personalities, and positions in five years. Every team has been extremely relevant and competitive. That has not happened by mistake. He has a way of elevating his teammates’ abilities and beliefs in themselves, and keeping them focused on the goal each night. If you are Corbin’s teammate, you do not let your guard down or relax with regard to any of the details of our program, on the court, off the court, or in the classroom.

“We lost a great senior class last year, a group of guys who had been really successful together the past two years,” Pearson said. “So, it was a big task with such a new group of guys to find that same level of success at first. But coach Huse is so great at bringing a group of guys together and teaching them how to play Northern basketball. I’ve always been so impressed with how he does that over and over again. It’s incredible to watch him bring us all together like that. So even though we got off to a slow start this season, we knew it was a marathon and not a sprint. I’ve been hearing that from coach for years, and so I’ve been telling our new guys that all season. I’ve been telling them that as long as we’re the hardest-working team in the Frontier, as long as we do all the little things, on and off the floor the right away, we’re going to be successful. And even though there’s only a few games left in the regular season, I still believe this team is going to be successful. I believe that as long as we play Northern basketball, we’re still going to do great things this season.

“So when that’s all over with, I’ll be able to really look back more on my own career,” he added. “But I am proud of all of it. I’m proud of my high school days at Big Sandy with all those great guys, and I’m proud and so blessed to have gotten the opportunity to play here at Northern, with so many great teams and so many
great teammates and friends. I am really proud of this ride I’ve been on. It's been a great one.”

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