



For Immediate Release
Feb. 22, 2021

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Illinois State • Indiana State • Missouri State • North Dakota • North Dakota State • Northern Iowa
South Dakota • South Dakota State • Southern Illinois • Western Illinois • Youngstown State

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2020-21 Valley Football Standings (through Sunday, Feb. 21)

| Team | MVFC | | Points | | Overall | Points | | H | A | Stk. |
|--------------------|------|-------|--------|-----|---------|--------|------|-----|-----|---------|
| | W-L | Pct. | For | Opp | | W-L | Pct. | | | |
| N. Dakota State | 1-0 | 1.000 | 25 | 7 | 2-0 | 1.000 | 64 | 35 | 2-0 | 0-0 W39 |
| North Dakota | 1-0 | 1.000 | 44 | 21 | 1-0 | 1.000 | 44 | 21 | 1-0 | 0-0 W1 |
| South Dakota State | 1-0 | 1.000 | 24 | 20 | 1-0 | 1.000 | 24 | 20 | 0-0 | 1-0 W1 |
| Illinois State | 0-0 | .000 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 | .000 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 | 0-0 L1 |
| South Dakota | 0-0 | .000 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 | .000 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 | 0-0 W1 |
| Western Illinois | 0-0 | .000 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 | .000 | 0 | 0 | 0-0 | 0-0 L3 |
| Southern Illinois | 0-1 | .000 | 21 | 44 | 1-1 | .500 | 41 | 61 | 1-0 | 0-1 L1 |
| Missouri State | 0-0 | .000 | 0 | 0 | 0-3 | .000 | 44 | 108 | 0-1 | 0-2 L11 |
| UNI | 0-1 | .000 | 20 | 24 | 0-1 | .000 | 20 | 24 | 0-1 | 0-0 L2 |
| Youngstown State | 0-1 | .000 | 7 | 25 | 0-1 | .000 | 7 | 25 | 0-0 | 0-1 L1 |

Indiana State has opted out of the Spring 2021 season

• • Media Services • •

Players of the Week

Each week a panel will select players of the week for offense, defense, newcomer, offensive line and special teams.

Statistics

Interactive school and league statistics are available, courtesy of the league's partnership with SIDEARM.

Weekly Features

The league produces weekly video segments (Two Minute Drill and The Extra Point) and a bimonthly audio podcast (First and Goal). Each is available by visiting the league's web site (valleyfootball.org) - under the Multimedia tab on the main menu bar.

www.valley-football.org



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MVFC Schedule/Results

Friday, Feb. 19

#5 South Dakota State at #3 UNI SDSU, 24-20

Saturday, Feb. 20

#24 S. Illinois at North Dakota UND, 44-21

Sunday, Feb. 21

Youngstown State at #1 NDSU NDSU, 25-7

Saturday, Feb. 27

#5 UNI at RV Youngstown St., 11 a.m. CT [MVFC TV]

South Dakota at #7 Illinois State, 12 p.m. CT

Missouri State at Western Illinois, 12 p.m. CT

#3 SDSU at #14 North Dakota, 12 p.m. CT

#1 NDSU at RV Southern Illinois, 12 p.m. CT

Thursday, March 4

South Dakota at North Dakota, 5 p.m. CT

Saturday, March 6

Illinois State at UNI, 4 p.m. CT

North Dakota State at Missouri State, 2 p.m. CT

Western Illinois at South Dakota State, 2 p.m. CT

Southern Illinois at Youngstown State, 11 a.m. CT

Saturday, March 13

Illinois State at North Dakota State, 2:30 p.m. CT

Missouri State at South Dakota, 1 p.m. CT

North Dakota at Western Illinois, 12 p.m. CT

UNI at Southern Illinois, 12 p.m. CT

Youngstown State at SDSU, 2 p.m. CT

Welcome to the MVFC

Following Saturday's North Dakota win over visiting Southern Illinois, seven Valley Football schools have played their first Conference game after the league's inaugural season (1985).

► Indiana State (1986) - won its first league game. Beat Missouri State (9-13-86), 14-10. ISU tied for sixth that year with a 1-5 league record.

► Youngstown State (1997) - won its first league game. Shut out Indiana State (10-4-97), 31-10. YSU finished 3rd (4-2 league record), but did win the national championship. YSU remains the only team to record a shut out in its first league game.

► Western Kentucky (2001) - lost its first league game at Western Illinois (8-30-01), 17-13. Western Kentucky tied for second (5-2 league record) in the league and lost a first-round playoff game.

► SDSU (2008) - The Jackrabbits beat visiting #14 Youngstown State, 40-7 (9-6-08). At the time, the 40 points tied for the most points for a school in its first league game (Missouri State also had 40 in a 40-28 victory over Southern Illinois on 9/7/85, in what was the first-ever league game).

► NDSU (2008) - The Bison lost at Youngstown State, 32-24 (9-20-08). North Dakota State's final drive ended with a YSU interception in the endzone.

► USD (2012) - The Coyotes lost at home to Illinois State, 34-31. USD scored in the final seconds to cut the lead to 3 points and then ISU recovered an on-side kick to thwart the comeback.

► UND (2020-21) - The Fighting Hawks scored more points than any other league team in an MVFC debut game, downing visiting #24 Southern Illinois, 44-21, on 2-20-21. UND is just the second MVFC team to win its league debut against a ranked league team.

Streaking

North Dakota State's 39-game winning streak is the third longest in Division I history and the longest in FCS history surpassing the record 33-game Bison winning streak from 2012-14.

47 - Oklahoma, 1953-57

40 - Washington, 1908-14

39 - North Dakota State, 2017-present

37 - Yale, 1890-93

37 - Yale, 1887-89

35 - Toledo, 1969-71

34 - Miami (Fla.), 2000-03

34 - Penn., 1894-96

33 - North Dakota State, 2012-14



ESPN APP is MVFC Digital Home

The ESPN App curates all of ESPN's incredible content into a personalized experience unique to each fan's tastes. All MVFC home games will be available

through the App, airing either on ESPN3 or ESPN+.

Players of the Week

Offense

RB Pierre Strong Jr., South Dakota State
5-11, 210, Jr., Little Rock, Ark.

Strong tallied 142 all-purpose yards and scored the game-winning touchdown on a 1-yard pass play with 19 seconds remaining in South Dakota State' 24-20 victory at Northern Iowa on Feb. 19. The junior running back rushed 22 times for 91 yards and caught a team-high six passes for 31 yards. He added a 20-yard kickoff return to round out his performance.

Defense

LB Devon Krzanowski, North Dakota
6-2, 235, Jr., Fond du Lac, Wis.

Playing in his first Division I game after transferring from St. Cloud State, tallied two tackles for loss, recovered UND's third forced fumble of the first half and took it for a 36-yard score to put the Fighting Hawks in front, 16-7, late in that opening frame ... Helped the UND defense force five turnovers that led to 27 points in the win over No. 24 SIU, the most turnovers forced by the Hawks since a 2016 win over Montana State.

Newcomer

QB Mark Gronowski, South Dakota State
6-3, 200, Fr., Naperville, Ill.

In his collegiate debut, the true freshman accounted for all three South Dakota State touchdowns in the fifth-ranked Jackrabbits' 24-20 victory at No. 3 Northern Iowa. Gronowski completed 19-of-29 passes for 194 yards and touchdown passes of 6 yards to Jaxon Janke in the second quarter and the game-winning 1-yard toss to Pierre Strong, Jr. with 19 seconds remaining in the game that capped a 10-play, 75-yard drive. He also rushed for 24 yards on 10 carries, including a 5-yard touchdown late in the first half. Gronowski connected with seven different receivers in the game.

Special Teams

PK Jake Reinholz, North Dakota State
6-3, 217, Jr., Fargo, N.D.

Reinholz scored seven points in North Dakota State's 25-7 victory over Youngstown State. His two-point conversion run put NDSU ahead 8-0 late in the first quarter, and his second career field goal (from 28 yards) gave the Bison an 11-0 lead before halftime. Reinholz added a pair of extra point kicks and averaged 62.8 yards on five kickoffs with two touchbacks.

Offensive Line

C Nathan Nguon, North Dakota
6-3, 295, Sr., Burnsville, Minn.

Helped quarterback Tommy Schuster remain spotless in his first-collegiate start, not surrendering a sack against No. 24 SIU ... Aided the UND rushing attack to 229 yards and 5.9 yards per carry ... Overall, averaged 5.4 yards per play and totaled 347 yards of total offense.

Ranked vs. Ranked

When No. 5 South Dakota State knocked off No. 3 UNI on Feb. 19, it marked the 185th game in which two MVFC teams ranked in the top 25 played one another. Of those 185 games, 51 times the meeting involved teams that were both ranked in the Top 10 at the same time. Twelve meetings have occurred in the playoffs. The home team is now 105-79, while the higher-ranked team is 117-68. One game (between Illinois State and North Dakota State in Frisco, Texas, on Jan. 10, 2015) was played at a neutral site. On Oct. 26, #1 North Dakota State beat #3 South Dakota State in what was just the fourth meeting between two MVFC schools ranked in the Top 3.

MVFC -- Two Top-3 Teams vs. Each Other

| | | |
|----------|--------------------|-------------|
| 10/29/11 | #2 UNI at #3 NDSU | NDSU, 27-19 |
| 10/6/12 | #3 YSU at #1 NDSU | NDSU, 48-7 |
| 9/29/18 | #3 SDSU at #1 NDSU | NDSU, 21-17 |
| 10/26/19 | #1 NDSU at #3 SDSU | NDSU, 23-16 |

Home-Opening Win Streaks

Despite being a new-look season, UND continued to roll in home openers, notching its 34th straight win. The Fighting Hawks are perfect in the Alerus Center in debuts since the building opened in 2001 and the 23-point win over No. 24 Southern Illinois was the first over a ranked opponent in that situation. North Dakota State extended its streak -- second-best nationally -- to 22.

34 -- North Dakota (1987-present)

22 -- North Dakota State (1999-present)

21 -- Central Arkansas (2000-present)
19 -- Harvard (2001-present)
18 -- James Madison (2003-present)
16 -- Montana (2004-present)
15 -- McNeese (2005-present)

Open Season

This year marks the 36th season for the league. North Dakota State extended its active winning streak in MVFC season-opening games to 10 games with a 25-7 victory vs. Youngstown State on Feb. 21. Notably, Southern Illinois and Missouri State played in the league's first conference game on Sept. 7, 1985.

| Team | Record | Home | Away | Streak |
|----------------|--------|------|------|--------|
| Illinois State | 15-20 | 6-7 | 9-13 | L2 |
| Indiana State | 11-23 | 9-10 | 2-13 | L3 |
| Missouri St. | 16-19 | 7-11 | 9-8 | W2 |
| North Dakota | 1-0 | 1-0 | 0-0 | W1 |
| NDSU | 10-3 | 5-0 | 5-3 | W10 |
| UNI | 24-12 | 14-3 | 10-9 | L1 |
| South Dakota | 3-5 | 1-2 | 2-3 | W3 |
| SDSU | 6-7 | 4-3 | 2-4 | W2 |
| S. Illinois | 16-20 | 11-8 | 5-12 | L6 |
| W. Illinois | 18-17 | 12-7 | 6-10 | L1 |
| Youngstown St. | 18-6 | 11-0 | 7-6 | L3 |

5 MVFC Teams in Top 25

Five Valley Football teams are ranked in the Stats Perform Top 25 (Feb. 22), and all five are in the Top 14. North Dakota State, winners of an FCS-record 39-straight games, was a unanimous No. 1 choice. South Dakota State (3), UNI (5), Illinois State (7) and North Dakota (14) also represent the league in this week's poll. Southern Illinois and Youngstown State are among those receiving votes.

The first AFCA coaches poll of the season will be published on Monday, March 15.

The MVFC also holds six of the Top 10 spots in the Massey Ratings (and eight of the Top 15 positions in that metric).

| Team | STATS | AFCA | Massey | Sagarin |
|------|-------|------|--------|---------|
| NDSU | 1 | TBA | 1 | 1 |
| SDSU | 3 | TBA | 2 | 2 |
| UNI | 5 | TBA | 8 | 5 |
| ILS | 7 | TBA | 10 | 6 |
| UND | 14 | TBA | 4 | 11 |
| USD | -- | TBA | 7 | 18 |
| YSU | RV | TBA | 13 | 22 |
| SIU | RV | TBA | 15 | 27 |

Massey Ratings, Team Leaders

1. North Dakota State
2. South Dakota State
3. James Madison
4. North Dakota
5. Weber State
6. Eastern Washington
7. South Dakota
8. UNI
9. UC Davis
10. Illinois State

Among conferences, the MVFC is the top-rated league in the FCS (Sagarin), and four MVFC schools are in the Top 10.

Sagarin Rankings, Team Leaders (FCS)

1. North Dakota State
3. South Dakota State
3. James Madison (CAA)
4. Weber State (Big Sky)
5. UNI
6. Montana (Big Sky)
7. Illinois State

Sagarin Rankings, Conference Leaders (FCS)

1. MISSOURI VALLEY
2. Big Sky
3. CAA Football

Players of the Week

Feb. 22

Offense – RB Pierre Strong Jr., SDSU
 Defense – LB Devon Krzanowski, N. Dakota
 Special Teams – PK Jake Reinholz, NDSU
 *Newcomer – QB Mark Gronowski, SDSU
 Offensive Lineman – C Nathan Nguon, UND

**denotes National Player of the Week*

Fall MVFC Performers of the Week

S15 – LB Tylar Wiltz, Missouri State
 S29 – TB/WR Kevon Latulas, Missouri State
 O6 – FB Hunter Luepke, North Dakota State
 O6 – LB James Kaczor, North Dakota State
 O20 – TB Jeremiah Wilson, Missouri State
 N3 – RB Javon Williams Jr., Southern Illinois
 N3 – Blake Parzych, Southern Illinois
 N3 – PK Nico Gualdoni, Southern Illinois

MVFC Preseason Poll

North Dakota State has been tabbed as the Missouri Valley Football Conference pre-season favorite in a poll conducted by league coaches. NDSU has been picked first in the pre-season poll for nine-straight seasons.

North Dakota State has earned the league title for nine-straight years, four times sharing it with another league school. This year, NDSU received 101 points in the coaches vote to edge UNI (92) and SDSU (91).

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| 1. North Dakota State | 101 |
| 2. UNI | 92 |
| 3. South Dakota State | 91 |
| 4. Illinois State | 80 |
| 5. Southern Illinois | 68 |
| 6. South Dakota | 52 |
| 7. North Dakota | 39 |
| 8. Youngstown State | 36 |
| 9. Missouri State | 23 |
| 9. Western Illinois | 23 |

Indiana State opted out of spring season

Familiar Surroundings

This week's North Dakota State game at Southern Illinois is the first true road game for the Bison since the Nov. 23, 2019, when NDSU wrapped up the regular season at SIU. NDSU won 21-7 in that last meeting. The Bison have won four straight at Saluki Stadium and eight straight in the series overall since SIU's 24-14 home win in 2009.

Pressing Pause

Only three Missouri Valley football teams participated in non-conference action this past fall, with Missouri State (0-3), North Dakota State (1-0) and Southern Illinois (1-0) playing a slate of games that featured five ranked opponents. Indiana State opted out of the spring schedule (which features 40 conference games).

Conference Games Scheduled/Played: 40/3
 MVC Games Postponed/Rescheduled: 2/2
 Games Canceled: 0

National Honors

South Dakota State's Mark Gronowski was selected as the Stats Perform FCS National Freshman Player of the Week. The league's Newcomer of the Week, he accounted for all three South Dakota State touchdowns as the Jackrabbits prevailed in the matchup between top-five teams. He completed 19-of-29 passes for 194 yards and TD passes of 6 yards to Jaxon Janke in the second quarter and the 1-yard toss to Pierre Strong Jr. to cap the 10-play, 75-yard game-winning drive in the 24-20 win at UNI. He also rushed for 24 yards on 10 carries, including a 5-yard touchdown late in the first half.

Taking the Show on the Road

North Dakota State will look to extend its FCS-best road winning streak when it heads to Carbondale. The Bison have won 10-straight road games. The streaks below include only teams that are playing a Spring 2021 FCS schedule.

NCAA Leaders, Active Road Win Streaks

10 - North Dakota State (MVFC)

- 6 - Tarleton State (Ind.)
- 5 - James Madison (CAA)

It's Early, But ...

Five MVFC schools are among the Top 10 in the FCS in fewest rushing yards allowed per game. South Dakota State leads the MVFC and ranks second nationally after yielding just 28 rushing yards against UNI.

NCAA Leaders, Rushing Defense (YPG)

| Team (Conf.) | G | YPG |
|-------------------------------|----------|--------------|
| 1. James Madison (CAA) | 1 | -6.0 |
| 2. SDSU (MVFC) | 1 | 28.0 |
| 3. NDSU (MVFC) | 2 | 61.0 |
| 4. Furman (SoCon) | 1 | 67.0 |
| 5. ETSU (SoCon) | 1 | 89.0 |
| 6. Nicholls (Southland) | 1 | 90.0 |
| 6. North Dakota (MVFC) | 1 | 90.0 |
| 8. Missouri St. (MVFC) | 3 | 105.0 |
| 9. UNI (MVFC) | 1 | 116.0 |
| 10. Chattanooga (SoCon) | 1 | 122.0 |

2020-21 Valley Football Teams in the Top 25

| Team | Pre | F22 |
|----------------|-----|-----|
| Illinois State | 9 | 7 |
| Indiana St. | -- | -- |
| Missouri St. | -- | -- |
| UND | rv | 14 |
| NDSU | 1 | 1 |
| UNI | 3 | 5 |
| S. Dakota | -- | -- |
| SDSU | 5 | 3 |
| S. Illinois | 24 | rv |
| W. Illinois | -- | -- |
| Youngstown | rv | rv |

**Rank represents highest position in the two polls (STATS or AFCA FCS Coaches polls)*