



For Immediate Release
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Mike Kern

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 Saturday, Feb. 27)

Team	MVFC		Points		Overall		Points		H	A	Stk.
	W-L	Pct.	For	Opp	W-L	Pct.	For	Opp			
North Dakota	2-0	1.000	72	38	2-0	1.000	72	38	2-0	0-0	W2
South Dakota	1-0	1.000	27	20	1-0	1.000	27	20	0-0	1-0	W1
Missouri State	1-0	1.000	30	24	1-3	.250	74	132	0-1	1-2	W1
N. Dakota State	1-1	.500	39	45	2-1	.667	78	73	2-0	0-1	L1
Southern Illinois	1-1	.500	59	58	2-1	.667	79	75	2-0	0-1	W1
UNI	1-1	.500	41	24	1-1	.500	41	24	0-1	1-0	W1
S. Dakota State	1-1	.500	41	48	1-1	.500	41	48	0-0	1-1	L1
Illinois State	0-1	.000	20	27	0-1	.000	20	27	0-1	0-0	L2
Western Illinois	0-1	.000	24	30	0-1	.000	24	30	0-1	0-0	L4
Youngstown State	0-2	.000	7	46	0-2	.000	7	46	0-1	0-1	L2

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

Saturday, Feb. 27

#5 UNI at RV Youngstown State UNI, 21-0
South Dakota at #7 Illinois State USD, 27-20
Missouri State at Western Illinois MSU, 30-24
#3 SDSU at #14 North Dakota UND, 28-17
#1 NDSU at RV Southern Illinois SIU, 38-14

Thursday, March 4

#20 South Dakota at #4 North Dakota, 5 p.m. CT [Midco / ESPN+]

Saturday, March 6

#11 Southern Illinois at Youngstown State, 11 a.m. CT [ESPN+]
#6 North Dakota State at Missouri State, 2 p.m. CT [NBC ND/ESPN+]
Western Illinois at #8 South Dakota State, 2 p.m. CT [Midco/ESPN+]
#15 Illinois State at #3 UNI, 4 p.m. CT [Panther Sports Net/ESPN+]

Saturday, March 13

North Dakota at Western Illinois, 12 p.m. CT
UNI at Southern Illinois, 12 p.m. CT
Missouri State at South Dakota, 1 p.m. CT
Youngstown State at SDSU, 2 p.m. CT
Illinois State at North Dakota State, 2:30 p.m. CT

Saturday, March 20

South Dakota at Youngstown State, 11 a.m. CT
Western Illinois at Illinois State, 12 p.m. CT
SDSU at S. Illinois, 12 p.m. CT [MVFC TV]
North Dakota at North Dakota State, 2:30 p.m. CT
Missouri State at UNI, 4 p.m. CT

Winning Against No. 1

When Southern Illinois knocked off top-ranked and previously unbeaten North Dakota State this past Saturday, it marked the 18th time an MVFC member had recorded a win vs. the nation's top-rated team (10 of those 18 wins were against a fellow league member). As an MVFC member, Southern Illinois is now 2-5 vs. No. 1-ranked teams. Before knocking off the Bison, the Salukis beat top-ranked Western Kentucky in a league game in 2005.

The last time NDSU was ranked No. 1 and lost to an unranked team was on Oct. 13, 2012, when it fell to Indiana State, 17-14.

Year	Team	Opponent
1992	Eastern Illinois	UNI~
1993	Illinois State	Youngstown State
1997	UNI	Youngstown State~
1997	Youngstown St.	Villanova*
1998	Western Illinois	Youngstown State~
2002	Western Kentucky	McNeese State#
2005	Illinois State	Southern Illinois~
2005	Southern Illinois	Western Kentucky~
2005	UNI	New Hampshire*
2011	Youngstown St.	North Dakota State~
2011	North Dakota St.	Sam Houston State#
2012	Indiana State	North Dakota State~
2014	UNI	North Dakota State~
2014	Illinois State	New Hampshire*
2015	North Dakota St.	Jacksonville State#
2016	South Dakota St.	North Dakota State~
2017	North Dakota St.	James Madison#
20-21	Southern Illinois	North Dakota State~

*denotes playoffs; #FCS Championship Game
~denotes conference game

Streak Snapped

North Dakota State's 39-game winning streak was snapped by Southern Illinois. The 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, 2017-21
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

QB Nic Baker, Southern Illinois
5-9, 194, So., Rochester (Ill.) High

Baker, making his first-career start, completed 17-of-23 passes for 254 yards, 1 TD and no interceptions. Baker guided a Saluki offense that generated five touchdowns and 443 yards of offense against the No. 1 ranked Bison. The Salukis were 11-of-16 in 3rd down conversions and had a 41:26 to 18:34 advantage in Time of Possession. The SIU win ended NDSU's 39-game winning streak, the longest in FCS history and third-longest in Division I history.

Defense

DE Kevin Ellis, Missouri State

6-4, 241, Jr., Fort Worth (Texas) North Crowley

Ellis was everywhere for an MSU defense that allowed just 48 rushing yards on 30 carries at Western Illinois on Saturday. In the final five minutes of the game, Ellis was responsible for two forced turnovers on WIU's last two possessions, snagging a one-handed interception to halt a Leatherneck rally before forcing a fumble and turnover on WIU's final play of the game to secure MSU's victory. Ellis also had a possession-ending sack in the first half and finished the contest with 6 total stops, 5 solo tackles, 2.0 sacks, 2.0 tackles for loss, an interception and a forced fumble in MSU's first win of the Petrino era.

Newcomer

LB Josh Navratil, North Dakota

6-2, 225, R-Fr., Pine Island (Minn.) High

Was all over the field in UND's win over No. 3 South Dakota State ... Finished tied for second on the team with five tackles ... Had 1.5 tackles for loss ... Came up with a sack on third down in the fourth quarter to keep the Fighting Hawks in the lead ... Recovered the blocked punt in the third quarter that led to the go-ahead touchdown.

Special Teams

P Brady Schutt, South Dakota

6-1, 215, Sr., Orange City (Iowa) MOC/FV High

The preseason all-American picked up where he left off, averaging 45.6 yards on seven punts, pinning two inside the 20 and allowing just two returns for 12 yards. He had three punts of 50 yards or more including his final one, which pinned the Redbirds on their 15 with 1:34 to go and needing a touchdown to tie.

Offensive Line

OC Chase Arends, UNI

6-1, 300, So., Cedar Falls (Iowa) Dike-New

Three Panther starters for week one were unavailable for week two because of COVID protocols and contact tracing. Chase Arends stepped into the lineup for the Panthers at Center and had an outstanding performance. He anchored a line that racked up 191 yards rushing and didn't give up a single sack. The Panthers were dominant throughout, converting nine of 14 first downs and scoring every time that UNI entered the red zone.

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	15-21	6-8	9-13	L3
Indiana State	11-23	9-10	2-13	L3
Missouri St.	17-19	7-11	10-8	W3
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	4-5	1-2	3-3	W4
SDSU	6-7	4-3	2-4	W2
S. Illinois	16-20	11-8	5-12	L6
W. Illinois	18-18	12-8	6-10	L2
Youngstown St.	18-6	11-0	7-6	L3

Blankity Blank

UNI pitched a shutout against Youngstown State, marking the 44th time in league history that a shutout was recorded in a Conference game. The Panthers have recorded more shutouts in league play than any other MVFC member, and they've yet to be shut out in their 36-year MVFC history.

Shutouts Recorded	Times Shut Out
UNI - 10	Indiana State - 14
Illinois State - 6	Missouri State - 8
North Dakota State - 6	Illinois State - 5
Southern Illinois - 5	Youngstown State - 5
Western Illinois - 5	Western Illinois - 4
Youngstown State - 4	South Dakota - 3
South Dakota State - 3	Southern Illinois - 2
Missouri State - 2	North Dakota State - 1
South Dakota - 2	South Dakota State - 1
Western Kentucky - 1	Western Kentucky - 1
Indiana State - 0	UNI - 0
North Dakota - 0	North Dakota - 0

UND -- Another Top 25 Win

North Dakota continues to keep it rolling against teams inside the top-25, notching its 13th win as a Division I program against a ranked foe and its fifth straight victory at home. The No. 3 ranking held by South Dakota State was the highest-ranked opponent that UND has clipped since moving to DI in 2008 and second straight top-10 opponent to taste defeat inside the Alerus Center (No. 9 Montana State - Oct. 26, 2019)

MVFC Top-25 Victories This Season

10-03-20	#1 NDSU vs. #11 Central Arkansas, 39-28
10-30-20	#24 SIU vs. #25 SE Missouri State, 20-17
02-19-21	#5 SDSU at #3 UNI, 24-20
02-20-21	North Dakota vs. #24 SIU, 44-21
02-27-21	South Dakota at #7 Illinois State, 27-20
02-27-21	Southern Illinois vs. #1 NDSU, 38-14
02-27-21	#14 UND vs. #3 SDSU, 28-17

7 MVFC Teams in Top 25

Seven teams from the Missouri Valley Football Conference are ranked in this week's Stats Perform Top 25 poll, with all seven in the Top 20, and six teams in the Top 15. It marks just the fourth time in league history that six league teams have been ranked in the Top 15 (matching three occurrences in 2017).

Seven league teams have been ranked in the same week 16 times previously, and the league record is eight (Sept. 29, 2014).

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

The MVFC also holds six of the Top 8 spots in the Massey Ratings (and seven of the Top 15 positions in that metric).

Team	STATS	AFCA	Massey	Sagarin
UNI	3	TBA	8	3
UND	4	TBA	1	6
NDSU	6	TBA	3	2
SDSU	8	TBA	5	1
SIU	11	TBA	7	8
ILS	15	TBA	15	14
USD	20	TBA	6	12

Massey Ratings, Team Leaders

- 1. North Dakota (MVFC)**
- Weber State (Big Sky)
- 3. North Dakota State (MVFC)**
- James Madison (CAA)
- 5. South Dakota State (MVFC)**
- 6. South Dakota (MVFC)**
- 7. Southern Illinois (MVFC)**
- 8. UNI (MVFC)**
- Nicholls (Southland)
- Idaho (Big Sky)

Among conferences, the MVFC is the top-rated league in the FCS (Sagarin), and five MVFC schools are in the Top 8.

Sagarin Rankings, Team Leaders (FCS)

- 1. South Dakota State**
- 2. North Dakota State**
- 3. UNI**
- James Madison (CAA)
- Weber State (Big Sky)
- 6. North Dakota**
- Montana (Big Sky)
- 8. Southern Illinois**

Sagarin Rankings, Conference Leaders (FCS)

- 1. MISSOURI VALLEY**
- Big Sky
- CAA Football

Players of the Week

Feb. 22

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

March 1

Offense -- QB Nic Baker, Southern Illinois
 Defense -- DE Kevin Ellis, Missouri State
 Newcomer -- LB Josh Navratil, North Dakota
 Special Teams -- P Brady Schutt, South Dakota
 Offensive Lineman -- C Chase Arends, UNI

*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
 O20 -- TB Jeremiah Wilson, Missouri State
 N3 -- RB Javon Williams Jr., Southern Illinois
 N3 -- Blake Parzych, Southern Illinois
 N3 -- PK Nico Gualdoni, Southern Illinois

Ranked vs. Ranked

When No. 14 North Dakota knocked off No. 3 South Dakota State on Feb. 27, it marked the 186th game in which two MVFC teams ranked in the top 25 played one another. Of those 186 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 106-79, while the higher-ranked team is 117-69. 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

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

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: 40/8
 MVC Games Postponed/Rescheduled: 2/2
 Games Canceled: 0

SIU - National Team of the Week

SIU has been named the Stats Perform National Team of the Week. The Salukis earned their second all-time win over a top-ranked opponent, handing three-time defending FCS champion NDSU the second-largest loss of its Division I era (since 2004).

A Winning Tradition

Illinois State's 10-5 overall record in 2019 was the 10th season at .500 or better in the last 11 seasons under the leadership of coach Brock Spack, who began his tenure at ISU with 6-5 records in both 2009-10. That consistency of winning has not been seen at ISU since the 1940's, when the Redbirds posted seven winning seasons in eight years from 1943-50 under the guidance of coaches Howard Hancock and Edwin Struck. Overall, the Redbirds have amassed a 84-50 (.627) record under the leadership of Spack, as he sits just two wins away from tying Howard Hancock for the program wins record.

Camp Gets the Start

Carson Camp became the first true freshman quarterback to start a football game for South Dakota since 1999, and the first to start a season opener in recorded history. He passed for 221 yards and accounted for all three touchdowns in South Dakota's 27-20 upset of seventh-ranked Illinois State.

2020-21 Valley Football Teams in the Top 25

Team	Pre	F22	M1
Illinois State	9	7	15
Indiana St.	--	--	--
Missouri St.	--	--	--
UND	rv	14	4
NDSU	1	1	6
UNI	3	5	3
S. Dakota	--	--	20
SDSU	5	3	8
S. Illinois	24	rv	11
W. Illinois	--	--	--
Youngstown	rv	rv	--

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

2020-21 Missouri Valley Football Conference Weekly Release (March 1)

Win No. 100 for Farley

UNI defeated Youngstown State on Saturday, Feb. 27, 21-0, marking the 100th league win for coach Mark Farley, now in his 20th year. He's the winningest coach in MVFC history.

MVFC Leaders, Coaching Wins in League Play

100 -- Mark Farley, UNI (2001-) 20th season
67 -- John Stiegelmeier, SDSU (2008-) 12th*
65 -- Terry Allen, UNI (89-96); MSU (06-14) 17 years
53 -- Brock Spack, Illinois State (2009-) 12th
51 -- Randy Ball, WIU (90-98); MSU (99-05) 16 years

*win total includes only years in which SDSU in the MVFC

Strong Cracks Top 10

Jackrabbit running back Pierre Strong Jr. moved into 10th place on the SDSU career rushing charts with a 95-yard performance Feb. 27 at North Dakota. A junior from Little Rock, Ark., Strong finished the day with 2,320 yards in 26 career games, taking over the 10th spot from Rick Wegher (2,293 yards from 1981-84). Next on the list is Darwin Gonnerman, who gained 2,598 yards from 1966-68.

Passing Fancy

Three MVFC schools are among the Top 8 in the FCS in passing yards per game, led by Western Illinois at No. 4. The Leathernecks racked up 281 yards through the air in their opener against Missouri State. Illinois State (5th) and South Dakota State (8th) also represent the league among the national leaders.

NCAA Leaders, Passing Offense (YPG)

Team (Conf.)	G	YPG
1. Houston Baptist (Southland)	4	459.5
2. Northern Arizona (Big Sky)	1	301.0
3. Southern Utah (Big Sky)	1	288.0
4. Western Illinois (MVFC)	1	281.0
5. Illinois State (MVFC)	1	280.0
6. Samford (SoCon)	2	271.0
7. Jackson State (SWAC)	1	252.0
8. South Dakota State (MVFC)	2	251.5

Tough Against the Pass

Three league schools rank in the Top 6 of the FCS for fewest passing yards allowed, led by Southern Illinois, which ranks 4th while allowing just 110.0 yards per game in its three contests this season.

NCAA Leaders, Fewest Pass Yards Allowed (YPG)

Team (Conf.)	G	YPG
1. Nicholls State (Southland)	2	37.0
2. Jackson State (SWAC)	1	83.0
3. Chattanooga (SoCon)	2	91.5
4. Southern Illinois (MVFC)	3	110.0
5. Youngstown State (MVFC)	2	128.5
6. UNI (MVFC)	2	129.0

Bouncing Back vs. the Bears

North Dakota State's streak of five straight years winning back-to-back road games in Missouri Valley Football Conference came to end with last week's 38-14 loss at Southern Illinois. NDSU will hit the road again this week to face Missouri State, the same opponent NDSU faced in 2014 in a second straight MVFC road game after 19th-ranked Northern Iowa snapped NDSU's then FCS-record 33-game winning streak. The Bison beat the Bears 45-10 in Springfield that year. NDSU has not lost back-to-back games in conference or non-conference play since 2009 when the Bison lost five straight to open the MVFC schedule.

Leading the Nation

South Dakota's defense intercepted four passes and recovered three fumbles en route to topping Illinois State Saturday in Normal. True freshman cornerback Myles Harden earned the start and came away with two interceptions. His first came with 45 seconds left in the first half and led to a game-tying touchdown. The Yotes are tops in the FCS with a +6 turnover differential.

Nice Debut

Western Illinois' redshirt freshman Greg Benton Jr. returned a 75-yard fumble recovery for a TD in Western's season-opener vs. Missouri State. He finished with seven tackles (six solo), a pass breakup, and two QB hurries in the season opener for WIU.

Stopping the Rush

Led by Illinois State (9th), six MVFC schools rank in the Top 19 in fewest rushing yards allowed per game. The Redbirds yielded just 79 yards to South Dakota in the season-opening game for both schools.

NCAA Leaders, Rushing Defense (YPG)

Team (Conf.)	G	YPG
1. James Madison (CAA)	2	8.0
2. Jackson State (SWAC)	1	21.0
3. Southern Utah (Big Sky)	1	42.0
4. Furman (SoCon)	2	43.5
5. Nicholls State (Southland)	2	63.5
6. Eastern Washington (Big Sky)	1	70.0
7. Gardner-Webb (Big South)	1	71.0
8. Sam Houston State (Southland)	1	74.0
9. Illinois State (MVFC)	1	79.0
15. Missouri State (MVFC)	4	90.8
16. North Dakota (MVFC)	2	93.0
17. UNI (MVFC)	2	93.5
18. North Dakota State (MVFC)	3	97.3
19. South Dakota State (MVFC)	2	102.5

New Faces Step Up

Against NDSU on Feb. 21, the Youngstown State Penguins had 13 players start their first-ever games in a YSU uniform, in what was head coach Doug Phillips' debut game. On offense, TE Jake Benio, TB London Pearson, WR Malick Mbodj, WR Natavious Payne, OT Henry Yoboue, C Mike McAllister, OG Aidan Parker and OG Jaison Williams all started. On defense, DT Ty Eddington, FS Quincy Lenton, DB Keyon Martin, LB Grant Dixon and DT Vinny Gentile all made their initial start for YSU.

Vick Keys Petrino's First Win

WR Damoriea Vick of Missouri State helped set up the game-winning TD for the Bears in Saturday's win at Western Illinois with a 74-yard catch-and run late in the fourth quarter. MSU scored on the very next play for Bobby Petrino's first win as Bears head coach. Vick finished with 6 receptions for a career-high 138 receiving yards in the contest. He also set up another MSU score in the third quarter with a 34-yard reception that preceded Jose Pizano's game-tying FG. Vick was starting his 25th straight game.

Jefferson, Sampson Shine

In addition to MVFC Offensive Player of the Week QB Nic Baker of Southern Illinois, two others from the Land of Lincoln had superb performances and find themselves in the national leaders for total offense. Illinois State QB Bryce Jefferson ranks fourth in the FCS with his 345-yard performance, and QB Connor Sampson of Western Illinois is ninth.

NCAA Leaders, Total Offense (YPG)

Team (Conf.)	YPG
1. Eric Schmid, Sam Houston (SLand)	516.0
2. Cole Kelley, Southeastern La. (Southland)	464.0
3. Bailey Zappe, Houston Baptist (Southland)	461.8
4. Bryce Jefferson, Illinois State (MVFC)	345.0
5. Eric Barriere, Eastern Wash. (Big Sky)	323.0
6. Mike Beaudry, Idaho (Big Sky)	289.0
6. Cameron Ward, UIW (Southland)	289.0
8. Justin Miller, Southern Utah (Big Sky)	288.0
9. Connor Sampson, Western Illinois (MVFC)	279.0