



For Immediate Release April 6, 2021

i, 2021 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, April 3)

	Μ\	/FC	Po	ints		Ove	rall	Poi	ints			
Team	W-L	Pct.	For	Opp		W-L	Pct.	For	Орр	Н	Α	Stk.
North Dakota State	4-1	.800	119	71	Γ	5-1	.833	158	99	4-0	1-1	W3
South Dakota State	4-1	.800	149	78		4-1	.800	149	78	2-0	2-1	W3
North Dakota	4-1	.800	144	103		4-1	.800	144	103	3-0	1-1	L1
Missouri State	4-1	.800	100	106		4-4	.500	144	214	1-2	3-2	W3
Southern Illinois	3-3	.500	136	170		4-3	.571	156	187	3-1	1-2	L2
UNI	3-3	.500	117	84		3-3	.500	117	84	1-2	2-1	W1
South Dakota	1-3	.250	71	96		1-3	.250	71	96	0-1	1-2	L3
Illinois State	1-3	.250	69	86		1-3	.250	69	86	1-1	0-2	W1
Western Illinois	1-5	.167	120	197		1-5	.167	120	197	1-3	0-2	W1
Youngstown State	1-5	.167	98	132		1-5	.167	98	132	1-2	0-3	L1

Indiana State opted out of the Spring 2021 season; Illinois State opted out after its fourth spring game; Western Illinois opted out after its sixth spring game.

• • 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.

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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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+.

MVFC Schedule/Results

Saturday, April 3

Youngstown State at Western Illinois

WIU, 27-24

Saturday, April 10

Youngstown State at #15 Missouri State, 2 p.m. CT [ESPN+] #2 North Dakota State at #21 UNI, 4 p.m. CT [MVFC TV/ESPN+] South Dakota at South Dakota State (canceled) Western Illinois at Southern Illinois (canceled) North Dakota at Illinois State (canceled)

Saturday, April 17

North Dakota at Youngstown State, 11 a.m. CT [ESPN+] SDSU at NDSU, 2:30 p.m. CT [Midco/NBC ND/ESPN+] Western Illinois at South Dakota (canceled)

END OF REGULAR SEASON

6 MVFC Teams in Top 25

The Missouri Valley Football Conference continues to dominate the Top 25 rankings, with an FCS-best six teams in the Stats Perform poll this week. The CAA (5) and Southland (4) are next best. The MVFC also leads all FCS leagues with three teams in the Top 10. The Big Sky and CAA each have two teams among the Top 10 in the Stats poll.

In the Stats Perform poll, North Dakota State leads the league with its No. 2 national ranking, while South Dakota State (4), North Dakota (6), Missouri State (15), Southern Illinois (16) and UNI (24) are also ranked.

Team	STATS	AFCA	Massey	Sagarin
NDSU	2	3	1	1
SDSU	4	4	2	2
UND	6	6	6	9
MSU	15	23	12	31
SIU	16	18	11	19
UNI	24	21	10	8

Stats Perform Top-10 Teams (By Conference)

Missouri Valley Football - 3

Big Sky - 2 CAA Football - 2

Big South - 1 Ohio Vallev - 1

Onio Valley - 1 Southland - 1

Stats Perform Top-25 Teams (By Conference)

Missouri Valley Football - 6

CAA Football - 5

Southland - 4

Big Sky - 3

Ohio Valley - 3

Big South - 2 Southern - 2

Northeast - 1

Massey Ratings - Top 12 (By Conference)

Missouri Valley Football - 6

Big Sky - 3

CAA Football - 2

Southland - 1

Among conferences, the MVFC is the top-rated league in the FCS (Sagarin).

Sagarin Rankings, Conference Leaders (FCS)

1. Missouri Valley Football

- 2. Big Sky
- 3. CAA Football
- 4. Southern
- 5. Southland

2020-21 Missouri Valley Football Conference Weekly Release (April 6)

Players of the Week

Offense & Special Teams

WR Tony Tate, Western Illinois 5-9, 180, Sr., DeKalb (III.) High

Tate led all players with 197 all-purpose yards and scored three touchdowns as Western Illinois defeated Youngstown State, 27-24. on Saturday night. After Youngstown State took a 24-13 lead early in the third quarter, Tate returned the ensuing kick 95 yards for a touchdown to tie for the ninth-longest return in program history. It marked the second-longest kickoff return in the league this year (and only the second to go for a score). Tate had a total of 114 kickoff return yards; 72 receiving yards; and added six yards on punt returns) and three touchdowns. He scored on a 43-yard pass in the second quarter, the kickoff return, and the game-winning 28-yard TD reception with 6:35 remaining.

Defense

DB Michael Lawson, Western Illinois 5-10, 185, Sr., Hayward (Calif.) Patterson High Lawson returned a punt 36 yards for his first Leatherneck touchdown. He also recorded a career-high, game-high 14 tackles (10 solo) for his third game with 10-plus this season. His interception in the fourth quarter set up the go-ahead touchdown. Lawson pressured the Penguins all evening for a sack and two tackles combined for a loss of 10 yards. His punt return TD was the third in the league this year, and his 36-yard return was the secondlongest this spring in the MVFC. His 14 tackles matched a league season high.

Newcomer

TB Jaleel McLaughlin, Youngstown State 5-9, 175, Jr., Marshville (N.C.) Notre Dame Coll. For the fourth straight week, McLaughlin rushed for more than 100 yards as he collected 122 against Western Illinois on Saturday night. In the first quarter, he had the Penguins' first touchdown of the contest scoring a 73-yard run. It was the longest run of his YSU career. He finished with contest with 17 carries and one reception against the Leathernecks. He has rushed for more than 122 yards in each of the past four games.

Western Illinois Opts Out

Out of concern for the safety and well-being of its student-athletes, Western Illinois announced Monday it will opt out of the remainder of the 2021 spring football season. That announcement, coupled with the cancelation of the South Dakota-South Dakota State contest for April 10, leave the league just four regular-season games, each of which will impact the determination of the MVFC's regular-season champion and AQ.

If all four remaining games are played the league will have played 75 percent of its schedule (30 of 40 scheduled games).

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). Illinois State announced on March 21 that it would opt out of the remainder of its spring schedule, resulting in the cancelation of four league contests.

Conference Games Scheduled/Played: 40/26 MVC Games Postponed/Rescheduled: 3/2 Games Remaining (as of April 6): 4 Games Canceled: 10

Against the Top 25

League teams have combined for a total of 16 top-25 wins this year (two non-league games and 14 wins against league opponents). Four league schools have earned three top-25 wins this year.

MVFC Top-25 Victories This Season (16)

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 03-04-21 #4 UND vs. #20 South Dakota, 21-10 03-06-21 #3 UNI vs. #15 Illinois State, 20-10 03-13-21 #10 Southern Illinois vs. #4 UNI, 17-16 03-13-21 Missouri State at #21 S. Dakota, 27-24 03-13-21 #5 NDSU vs. #22 Illinois State, 21-13 03-20-21 Missouri State at #10 UNI, 13-6 03-20-21 #6 SDSU at #5 Southern Illinois, 44-3 03-20-21 #4 NDSU vs. #2 North Dakota, 34-13 03-27-21 Missouri State vs. #10 S. Illinois, 30-27

MVFC Top-25 Victories This Season, By School

- 3 North Dakota State
- 3 North Dakota
- 3 Missouri State
- 3 Southern Illinois
- 2 South Dakota State
- 1 South Dakota
- 1 UNI

MVFC 2021 Tiebreaker

Standings shall be determined according to respective won-lost records and winning percentages in Conference games. The team with the best won-lost percentage shall be champion.

In the event of an unbalanced schedule due to cancellation of games: If two (or more) teams have the same number of conference losses but a different number of conference wins, head-to-head results will take precedence over winning percentage.

If the game was cancelled between two teams with the same winning percentage in all conference games or the same number of conference losses but a different number of conference wins, move to tiebreaker for two teams below. If a game or games was cancelled between three or more teams with the same winning percentage in all conference games or the same number of conference losses but a different number of conference wins, move to tiebreaker for three or more teams below.

Two Teams Tied.

- 1. In the event of a two-team tie in the conference results and the two teams played each other, the winner of the game shall be declared the NCAA automatic qualifier.
- If the tied teams did not play each other, then each team's record against all common conference opponents shall be used to determine the NCAA automatic qualifier.
- 3. If the teams are still tied, then each team's record against the next highest common opponent in the conference standings shall be used to determine the NCAA automatic qualifier.
- 4. If the teams are still tied, the latest available Sagarin Rating shall be used as the final tiebreaker. Rating will only be used as a ranking system or tiebreaker in the event all teams under consideration have played a minimum of 8 total (non-conference plus conference) games. In the event only a partial schedule is played and Sagarin cannot be utilized, the Conference will utilize the Media (STATS) Top 25 poll to break the tie.

Three or More Teams Tied.

- 1. If at any point a tie is broken using the multiple-tie tiebreaker procedures and only two teams remain tied, the remaining teams shall revert to the two-way tiebreaker (See above).
- 2. If the tied teams all played one another, the team with the best cumulative record involving games among the tied teams shall be declared the NCAA automatic qualifier.
- 3. If the tied teams all played one another and have identical records against the other tied teams, then each team's record against all common conference opponents shall be used to determine the NCAA automatic bid. If teams are still tied, then each team's record against the next highest common opponent in the conference standings shall determine the automatic bid.
- 4. If the tied teams did not play each other, then each team's record against common conference opponents shall be used to determine the automatic bid. If the tied teams did not play each other, but one team played and defeated the other two teams, that team is the champion.
- 5. If the teams are still tied and they did not play each other, then each team's record against the next highest common opponent in the conference standings shall determine the automatic bid.
- 6. If the teams are still tied, the latest available Sagarin Rating shall be used as the final tiebreaker. Sagarin Rating will only be used as a ranking system or tiebreaker in the event all teams under consideration have played a minimum of 8 total (non-conference plus conference) games. In the event only a partial schedule is played and Sagarin cannot be utilized, the Conference will utilize the Media (STATS) Top 25 poll to break the tie.

2020-21 Missouri Valley Football Conference Weekly Release (April 6)

Players of the Week

Fall MVFC Performers of the Week

S15 -- LB Tylar Wiltz, Missouri State

S29 -- TB/WR Kevon Latulas, Missouri State

06 -- FB Hunter Luepke, North Dakota State

06 -- LB James Kaczor, North Dakota State

020 -- TB Jeremiah Wilson, Missouri State

N3 -- RB Javon Williams Jr., Southern Illinois

N3 -- Blake Parzych, Southern Illinois

N3 -- PK Nico Gualdoni, Southern Illinois

Feb. 22

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

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

March 8

Offense -- QB Mark Gronowski, South Dakota State Defense -- LB Spencer Cuvelier, UNI Newcomer -- TB Jaleel McLaughlin, Youngstown St. *Special Teams -- P Garret Wegner, North Dakota St. Offensive Lineman -- RT Garret Greenfield, SDSU

Offense -- OB Tommy Schuster, North Dakota Defense -- CB Montrae Braswell, Missouri State Newcomer -- QB Cam Miller, North Dakota State Special Teams -- PK Cole Frahm, South Dakota St. Offensive Lineman -- OG ZeVeyon Furcron, SIU

March 22

*Offense -- FB Hunter Luepke, North Dakota State Defense -- LB Grant Dixon, Youngstown State Newcomer -- RB Isaiah Davis, South Dakota State Special Teams -- K Jose Pizano, Missouri State Offensive Lineman -- RT Garret Greenfield, SDSU

March 29

*Offense -- RB Celdon Manning, Missouri State Defense -- LB Riley Van Wyhe, UNI Newcomer -- QB Matt Struck, Missouri State Special Teams -- DB Omar Brown, UNI Offensive Lineman -- OL Ian Fitzgerald, Missouri St.

April 4

Offense -- WR Tony Tate, Western Illinois Defense -- DB Michael Lawson, Western Illinois Newcomer -- TB Jaleel McLaughlin, Youngstown St. Special Teams -- WR Tony Tate, Western Illinois

April 11

Offense --

Defense --

Newcomer --

Special Teams --

Offensive Lineman --

April 18

Offense --

Defense --

Newcomer --Special Teams --

Offensive Lineman --

*denotes National Player of the Week

Title Town

Four Conference teams are tied with identical 4-1 records with two weekends remaining. With a win against Youngstown State on Saturday (April 10), Missouri State can earn at least a share of its first league title since 1990. MSU has two all-time MVFC titles to its credit (1989 and 1990).

(Due to the imbalanced schedule this year brought about by cancelations, teams with the same number of conference losses but a different number of conference wins shall be considered 'tied.')

MVFC Total Tiles (Outright and Shared)

9 - North Dakota State

5 - Southern Illinois

5 -- Western Illinois

3 - Illinois State

2 - Eastern Illinois

2 - Missouri State

2 - Youngstown State

1 - South Dakota State

1 – Western Kentucky

Ranked vs. Ranked

The league has had 192 meetings all-time that featured two ranked MVFC teams. Of those 192 games, 54 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 111-80, while the higher-ranked team is 120-72.

One game (between Illinois State and North Dakota State in Frisco, Texas, on Jan. 10, 2015) was played at a neutral site.

North Dakota State's final two games this year are against ranked MVFC teams. So far this spring, there have been 3 games involving two league schools ranked in the Top 10.

MVFC -- Two Top-10 Teams vs. Each Other (2021)

02-19-21 #5 SDSU at #3 UNI. 24-20

03-20-21 #6 SDSU at #5 Southern Illinois, 44-3

03-20-21 #4 NDSU vs. #2 North Dakota, 34-13

The Path to the AQ

There are four games remaining on the league schedule, and each involves a team that is currently tied for first place in the MVFC standings (with 4-1 records).

The results of those four games will result in 16 different outcomes, and only North Dakota State controls its own destiny to earn the league's automatic berth by winning its final two games.

Assuming no other games involving the tied teams (Missouri State, North Dakota, North Dakota State, South Dakota State) would occur, here's a breakdown of how many possible scenarios favor each team in the path to the league's AQ.

Total Possible Scenarios - 16 Scenarios Resulting in AQ for Each Team

6 -- South Dakota State

5 -- North Dakota State

4 -- North Dakota

1 -- Missouri State

Home Streak at 32 Games

North Dakota State is on a school-record 32-game home winning streak, which is the fourth-longest in FCS history behind Georgia Southern (39, 38) and Eastern Kentucky (34). It is the longest active home winning streak in Division I and a Missouri Valley Football record, topping NDSU's 26-game home winning streak from 2012-15.

League teams are a combined 17-12 in home games this year, topped by NDSU's 4-0 mark in the Fargodome. UND (3-0) and SDSU (2-0) are the only other league teams unblemished at home this season.

Missouri State's current three-game road winning streak, meanwhile, is tied for fifthbest nationally and leads the MVFC.

NCAA Leaders, Home Win Streaks (Active)

32 -- North Dakota State

16 -- Eastern Washington

14 -- James Madison

10 -- North Dakota 10 -- Weber State

Team	Pre	F22	M1	M8	M15	M22	M29	A5
Illinois State	9	7	15	22	rv	rv		
Indiana St.	-							
Missouri St.	-				rv	rv	19	15
UND	rv	14	4	3	2	5	6	6
NDSU	1	1	6	5	4	2	2	2
UNI	3	5	3	4	10	22	20	21
S. Dakota			20	21	rv			
SDSU	5	3	8	8	6	4	4	4
S. Illinois	24	rv	11	10	5	10	18	16
W. Illinois	-				-			
Youngstown	rv	rv						

^{*}Rank represents highest position in the two polls (Stats Perform or AFCA FCS Coaches polls)

2020-21 Missouri Valley Football Conference Weekly Release (April 6)

Coates Sets YSU Mark

Senior WR/PR Jake Coates of Youngstown State has set the school's record for punt return yards in a career. Coates had three returns for 30 yards last Saturday at Western Illinois and now sits at 563 return yards surpassing the previous record of 534 by Trent Boykin. Boykin was a standout for the Penguins from 1991-94. Coates owns the school record with 86 career punt returns, which ranks third all-time in the MVFC.

Clean Slate

Four Missouri Valley Football teams are among the least penalized teams in the FCS, through games of April 3. North Dakota State (1st), North Dakota (2nd), South Dakota (t4th) and Illinois State (10th) represent the league in the Top 10. NDSU has been flagged just 15 total times in its six games (2.50 per game average).

NCAA Leaders, Penalties Per Game

Team	GP	Total	PPG
1. North Dakota St. (MVFC)	6	15	2.50
2. North Dakota (MVFC)	5	14	2.80
3. Cal Poly (Big Sky)	3	9	3.00
4. South Dakota (MVFC)	4	14	3.50
4. Furman (SoCon)	6	21	3.50
4. Lehigh (Patriot)	2	7	3.50
4. Monmouth (Big South)	2	7	3.50
8. Delaware (CAA)	3	11	3.67
8. VMI (SoCon)	6	22	3.67
10. Illinois State (MVFC)	4	15	3.75

Home Sweet Dome

Despite a 1-2 record this year, UNI holds a mark of 251-58-1 all-time in the UNI-Dome. The Panthers started playing home games in the UNI-Dome in 1976. UNI is 13-3 in the dome since the start of the 2018 season. North Dakota State, at No. 2, will mark the highest ranked opponent for the Panthers this year, who have a 1-2 mark vs. Top-25 teams in Spring 2021. UNI has beaten 15th-ranked Illinois State and lost to No. 5 South Dakota State and at No. 10 Southern Illinois. The Panthers have also lost to Missouri State, unranked at the time of the game but now ranked No. 15.

The NDSU-UNI Series

The Bison are 9-4 against UNI since joining the Missouri Valley Football Conference in 2008 including a 3-3 mark at the UNI-Dome, where the Bison have won two in a row. The teams have one postseason matchup in their history with NDSU winning 23-13 in 2015 NCAA FCS quarterfinals in Fargo.

FCS Committee Reveal

The FCS Committee revealed its Top 10 on ESPNU on Thursday night. The MVFC has more teams in the ranking than any other league; and all three of the MVFC teams are in the Top 5. James Madison is No. 1, followed by North Dakota State, South Dakota State, Sam Houston, and North Dakota. The MVFC has three teams in the Top 10; the Big Sky has two; and the CAA has two teams. (All three of the MVFC's teams are in the Top 5.)

April 3
DNP
DNP
DNP
Won
DNP
Won
DNP
Lost
Lost
Lost

What's at Stake

With three straight Top 25 wins, a 4-1 conference record, and a share of first place in the Missouri Valley Football Conference, No. 15 Missouri State concludes the regular season Saturday when it hosts Youngstown State at Robert W. Plaster Stadium for a 2 p.m. kickoff. It will be the first meeting between the MVFC foes since Nov. 18, 2017 and the first matchup at Plaster Stadium since 2016. A win for the Bears would mean ... team's first 4-game win streak since 2013; first winning record since 2009 (6-5); first 5-win league finish since 2013 (5-3); third 5-1 league finish in Valley play in program history (1989, 1990).

What's the Rush?

Six league teams are among the national FCS leaders in rushing yards per game. North Dakota State (5th), South Dakota State (12th) and North Dakota (17) are tops for the MVFC as each average more than 200 yards per game on the ground. Illinois State, Youngstown State and Southern Illinois also rank among the Top 33 in the FCS.

NCAA Leaders, Rushing Offense (YPG)

Team	G	YPG
1. Davidson (Pioneer)	5	297.6
2. Kennesaw State (Big South)	4	294.8
3. Nicholls (Southland)	5	271.0
4. James Madison (CAA)	4	257.8
5. North Dakota State (MVFC)	6	237.7
5. NOTHI DAKOLA SLALE (MVFC)		201.1
12. South Dakota State (MVFC)	5	218.6
12. South Dakota State (MVFC)	5	218.6
12. South Dakota State (MVFC) 17. North Dakota (MVFC)	5	218.6 206.4

In a Zone

South Dakota State leads the MVFC and ranks 10th nationally in Red Zone offense efficiency. The Jackrabbits have converted 94 percent of their chances into scores. The Jacks also rank among the Top 15 in Red Zone defense, with just 69 percent of opponent chances inside the Red Zone resulting in scores.

Only four schools (among those with four or more games played) rank in the Top 25 of both categories, including Murray State, South Dakota State, Missouri State and UNI.

NCAA Leaders, Red Zone Offense

Team	G	Pct.
1. Alabama A&M (SWAC)	1	1.000
1. Bucknell (Patriot)	2	1.000
1. Idaho (Big Sky)	3	1.000
1. Prairie View (SWAC)	2	1.000
1. Rhode Island (CAA)	3	1.000
1. Texas Southern (SWAC)	2	1.000
7. Southeastern La. (Southland)	5	.964
8. James Madison (CAA)	4	.950
8. Sam Houston (Southland)	4	.950
10. South Dakota St. (MVFC)	5	.944
16. Illinois State (MVFC)	4	.900
16. Missouri State (MVFC)	8	.900
20. UNI (MVFC)	6	.889
23. North Dakota State (MVFC)	6	.882
NCAA Leaders, Red Zone Defe	ense	

17. Missouri State (MVFC) 21. UNI (MVFC)	8 6	.692 .750
15. South Dakota State (MVFC)	5	.688
15. Albany (NY) (CAA)	4	.688
14. Eastern Wash. (Big Sky)	5	.684
11. Richmond (CAA)	3	.667
11. Prairie View (SWAC)	2	.667
11. Lafayette (Patriot)	2	.667
10. Stony Brook (CAA)	4	.636
9. Southeast Mo. St. (OVC)	7	.625
7. Idaho (Big Sky)	3	.600
7. Holy Cross (Patriot)	2	.600
6. South Carolina St. (MEAC)	3	.556
5. Duquesne (NEC)	4	.545
3. Fordham (Patriot)	2	.500
3. Drake (Pioneer)	3	.500
2. Bucknell (Patriot)	2	.333
1. Alabama A&M (SWAC)	1	.000
Team	G	Pct
NCAA Leaders, Red Zone Def	ense	

Two Top Defenses

UNI and North Dakota State have the top two scoring defenses in the Missouri Valley Football Conference this spring with UNI allowing 14.0 points and NDSU 14.2 points per game. The Panthers have been the stronger team in the red zone allowing only seven TDs and five field goals in 16 opponent trips inside the 20, while NDSU opponents are 8 of 8 with eight TDs in the red zone this spring. UNI leads the MVFC with 16 sacks through six league games, while NDSU has allowed just two sacks in five games.