



For Immediate Release
August 31, 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

1818 Chouteau Ave. • St. Louis, MO 63103 • (314) 444-4326 • (314) 435-4779 [Kern cell]



2021 Valley Football Standings (thru Aug. 28)

Team	MVFC		Points		Overall		Points		H	A	Stk.
	W-L	Pct.	For	Opp	W-L	Pct.	For	Opp			
Indiana State	0-0	.000	0	0	1-0	1.000	26	21	1-0	0-0	W1
Illinois State	0-0	.000	0	0	0-0	.000	0	0	0-0	0-0	W1
Missouri State	0-0	.000	0	0	0-0	.000	0	0	0-0	0-0	L1
North Dakota	0-0	.000	0	0	0-0	.000	0	0	0-0	0-0	L1
North Dakota State	0-0	.000	0	0	0-0	.000	0	0	0-0	0-0	L1
UNI	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	L3
South Dakota State	0-0	.000	0	0	0-0	.000	0	0	0-0	0-0	L1
Southern Illinois	0-0	.000	0	0	0-0	.000	0	0	0-0	0-0	L1
Western Illinois	0-0	.000	0	0	0-0	.000	0	0	0-0	0-0	W1
Youngstown State	0-0	.000	0	0	0-0	.000	0	0	0-0	0-0	L2

6 MVFC Teams in Top 25

The Missouri Valley Football Conference continues to dominate the Top 25 rankings, with six teams in the Stats Perform preseason Top 25 rankings. Four teams are ranked in the Top 8 in that poll, led by 2020-21 national runnerup South Dakota State (3rd).

Stats Perform Top 25 (Preseason)

	School (first-place votes)	Rec.	Pts.	Prev.
1	Sam Houston (39)	10-0	1,228	1
2	James Madison (8)	7-1	1,180	3
3	South Dakota State (3)	8-2	1,156	2
4	North Dakota State	7-3	1,116	5
5	Delaware	7-1	1,017	4
6	Weber State	5-1	927	9
7	Southern Illinois	6-4	888	8
8	North Dakota	5-2	886	6
9	Montana	2-0	778	NR
10	Jacksonville State	10-3	744	7
11	Eastern Washington	5-2	659	10
12	Montana State	DNP	654	NR
13	Monmouth	3-1	618	11
14	Central Arkansas	5-4	561	NR
15	Southeastern Louisiana	4-3	559	20
16	Villanova	2-2	440	16
17	VMI	6-2	397	12
18	Chattanooga	3-2	295	NR
19	Kennesaw State	4-1	255	17
20	Austin Peay	4-5	227	23
21	Northern Iowa	3-4	219	NR
22	Nicholls	4-3	173	25
23	UC Davis	3-2	172	14
24	Missouri State	5-5	168	13
25	North Carolina A&T	9-3	159	NR

AFCA Coaches Top 25 (Preseason)

	School (first-place votes)	Rec.	Pts.	Prev.
1	Sam Houston (18)	10-0	682	1
2	James Madison (9)	7-1	667	3
3	North Dakota State	7-3	633	5
4	South Dakota State (1)	8-2	620	2
5	Delaware	7-1	567	4
6	Weber State	5-1	552	8
7	North Dakota	5-2	475	6
8	Jacksonville State	10-3	437	7
9	Montana	2-0	436	NR
10	Southern Illinois	6-4	418	9
11	Montana State	0-0	383	NR
12	Monmouth (N.J.)	3-1	382	10
13	Central Arkansas	0-0	363	NR
14	Eastern Washington	5-2	287	11
15	Villanova	2-2	284	18
16	Northern Iowa	3-4	268	NR
17	Southeastern Louisiana	4-3	267	21
18	Chattanooga	3-2	204	NR
19	VMI	6-2	167	12
20	Kennesaw State	4-1	165	15
21	UC Davis	3-2	135	16
22	Richmond	3-1	104	14
23	Nicholls	4-3	88	23
24	North Carolina A&T	0-0	75	NR
25	Austin Peay	4-5	65	NR

2021 MVFC Schedule

Saturday, Aug. 28

Eastern Illinois at Indiana State ISU, 26-21

Thursday, Sept. 2

Incarnate Word at Youngstown State, 6 p.m. CT (ESPN+)
#7/10 S. Illinois at SE Missouri State, 6:30 p.m. CT (ESPN+)
Western Illinois at Ball State, 7 p.m. CT (ESPN+)

Friday, Sept. 3

South Dakota at Kansas, 7 p.m. CT (ESPN+)
#3/4 South Dakota State at Colorado State, 8 p.m. CT (FS1)

Saturday, Sept. 4

#8/7 North Dakota at Idaho State, 2 p.m. CT
Albany at #4/3 N. Dakota State, 2:30 p.m. CT (ABC ND/ESPN+)
#21/16 UNI at Iowa State, 2:30 p.m. CT (ESPN+)
#24/RV Missouri State at Oklahoma State, 6 p.m. CT (ESPN+)
Butler at Illinois State, 6:30 p.m. CT (Marquee/ESPN3)

Friday, Sept. 10

North Dakota at Utah State, 8 p.m. CT (CBS Sports Network)

Saturday, Sept. 11

Youngstown St. at Michigan State, 11 a.m. CT (Big Ten Network)
Indiana State at Northwestern, 11 a.m. CT (Big Ten Network)
Northern Arizona at South Dakota, 1 p.m. CT (Midco/ESPN+)
Valparaiso at N. Dakota State, 2:30 p.m. CT (ABC ND/ESPN+)
Illinois State at Western Michigan, 4 p.m. CT (ESPN3)
Lindenwood at South Dakota State, 6 p.m. CT (Midco/ESPN3)
Southern Illinois at Kansas St., 6 p.m. CT (Big 12 Now/ESPN+)
Central Arkansas at Missouri State, 7 p.m. CT (ESPN+)
Western Illinois at Montana, 7 p.m. CT (ABC FOX MT)
UNI at Sacramento State, 8 p.m. CT (ESPN+)

Top-25 designations list Stats Perform poll first, followed by the AFCA Coaches rankings.

• • 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.

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FCS ALL IN

"FCS ALL IN" is a weekly news program dedicated to promoting all FCS conferences. The program is distributed via YouTube (youtube.com/c/FCSALLIN) and launched each Saturday at 10 a.m. ET.



MVFC Statistics

Please scan the QR code at the left to access Missouri Valley Football Conference statistics

MVFC Preseason Honors

Stats Perform MVFC Preseason All-Americans

FIRST TEAM

RB – Otis Weah, North Dakota
 FB – Hunter Luepke, North Dakota State
 WR – Avante Cox, Southern Illinois
 OL – Garret Greenfield, South Dakota State
 OL – Cordell Volson, North Dakota State
 DL – Jared Brinkman, UNI
 LB – Logan Backhaus, South Dakota State
 KR – Christian Watson, North Dakota State
 AP – Javon Williams Jr., Southern Illinois

SECOND TEAM

RB – Pierre Strong Jr., South Dakota State
 TE – Noah Gindorff, North Dakota State
 OL – Trevor Penning, UNI
 DL – Spencer Waege, North Dakota State
 LB – James Kaczor, North Dakota State
 DB – Qua Brown, Southern Illinois

THIRD TEAM

OL – ZeVeyon Furcron, Southern Illinois
 OL – Matt Waletzko, North Dakota
 DB – James Caesar, Southern Illinois
 P – Brady Schult, South Dakota
 AP – Isaiah Davis, South Dakota State

Stats Perform Walter Payton Award Watch List

WR – Avante Cox, Southern Illinois
 RB – Pierre Strong Jr., South Dakota State
 WR – Christian Watson, North Dakota State
 RB – Otis Weah, North Dakota

Stats Perform Buck Buchanan Award Watch List

DL – Jared Brinkman, UNI
 LB – Logan Backhaus, South Dakota State
 LB – James Kaczor, North Dakota State
 DB – Qua Brown, Southern Illinois

Butkus Award Watch List

LB – Jackson Hankey, North Dakota State

FCS Punter of the Year Watch List

JT Bohlken, Illinois State
 Brady Schutt, South Dakota

HERO Sports MVFC Preseason All-Americans

FIRST TEAM

RB – Pierre Strong Jr., South Dakota State
 RB – Otis Weah, North Dakota
 FB – Hunter Luepke, North Dakota State
 OL – Cordell Volson, North Dakota State
 OL – Mason McCormick, South Dakota State
 OL – Trevor Penning, Northern Iowa
 DL – Jared Brinkman, Northern Iowa
 LB – Logan Backhaus, South Dakota State
 LS – Bradley Sorenson, South Dakota State

SECOND TEAM

WR – Avante Cox, Southern Illinois
 TE – Noah Gindorff, North Dakota State
 OL – Garret Greenfield, South Dakota State
 OL – Matt Waletzko, North Dakota
 DB – Qua Brown, Southern Illinois
 RS – Christian Watson, North Dakota State

THIRD TEAM

WR – Christian Watson, North Dakota State
 LB – Bryce Flater, Northern Iowa
 LB – Jack Cochrane, South Dakota
 DB – Michael Tutsie, North Dakota State
 P – Brady Schutt, South Dakota
 LS – Dalton Godfrey, South Dakota

MVFC Now 3-1 in Week Zero

Indiana State opened up the 2021 season in Week Zero, knocking off visiting Eastern Illinois, 26-21, on Aug. 28. It marked the fourth time an MVFC team has been featured on ESPN in Week Zero. North Dakota State fell to Montana, 38-35, in the first-ever Week Zero contest on Aug. 29, 2015. The Bison also played in Week Zero in 2016, defeating Charleston Southern in Fargo, ND, on Aug. 27, 2016. Youngstown State opened up the 2019 campaign in Week Zero, defeating Samford at a neutral site in the Guardian Credit Union FCS Kickoff in Montgomery, Ala.

South Dakota State the Favorite

For the first time since joining the Missouri Valley Football Conference for the 2008 season, South Dakota State has been tabbed as the league pre-season favorite in a poll conducted by league coaches, media and sports information directors. SDSU received 24 first-place votes and 454 total points to edge North Dakota State, which earned 435 points and had 18 first-place tallies.

MVFC 2021 Preseason Poll

1. South Dakota State (24)	454
2. North Dakota State (18).....	435
3. North Dakota.....	357
4. Southern Illinois	345
5. UNI (1).....	311
6. Missouri State.....	256
7. Illinois State.....	196
8. South Dakota	163
9. Youngstown State	126
10. Indiana State	112
11. Western Illinois	83

Title Town

For the second time in MVFC history, the league had tri-champions. Missouri State, North Dakota and South Dakota State shared the crown during Spring 2021. It's Missouri State's third crown, UND's first (in its first year in the league). and South Dakota State's second. NDSU's record-setting streak of nine-straight league championships came to an end as the Bison finished a game behind the others.

(The other season in which the MVFC had tri-champions was in 2005 as UNI, Southern Illinois and Youngstown State shared the crown with identical 5-2 marks.)

MVFC Total Tiles (Outright and Shared)

16 – UNI
9 – North Dakota State
5 – Southern Illinois; Western Illinois
3 – Illinois State; Missouri State
2 – Eastern Illinois; SDSU, Youngstown State
1 – North Dakota, Western Kentucky

5 Teams in the 2020-21 Field

The Missouri Valley Football Conference matched an all-time high with five bids in last spring's field. Only three times previously in FCS playoff history has one conference sent as many as five teams in a 16-team field (CAA had five bids in both 2007 and 2008, and the CAA holds the all-time record with six berths during the 2018 tournament.)

MVFC Success in the Playoffs

The Missouri Valley Football Conference is 109-60 during the past 24 years in the FCS playoffs (since 1997). That includes 15 intra-conference matchups, meaning the league is 94-45 against teams from other leagues during that span. An MVFC team (Illinois State-1; North Dakota State-8; South Dakota State-1; Youngstown State-1) has played in the FCS championship game for 10-straight tournaments, an FCS record.

MVFC Against the FBS

Following Indiana State's Week Zero game against Eastern Illinois, MVFC teams will face five FBS foes the first week of the season (Sept. 2-4). Due to the pandemic last season, only Missouri State faced an FBS opponent, falling to Oklahoma. That broke a 10-year streak in which the MVFC had recorded at least one FBS win (2010-19). MVFC schools have combined for 46 wins all-time against FBS opponents.

Big Sky-MVFC Challenge Series

The 2021 marks the fifth year of the Big Sky-MVFC Challenge Series. Last year's series had no regular-season games, but the MVFC won both playoff meetings. The previous three seasons (2017-19) featured 26 total regular-season matchups. MVFC schools have a 16-10 overall edge in games played and have won the series each season (5-3 in 2017, 5-3 in 2018, 6-4 in 2019)

Sept. 4 – North Dakota at Idaho State
Sept. 11 – Northern Arizona at South Dakota
Sept. 11 – Western Illinois at Montana
Sept. 11 – UNI at Sacramento State
Sept. 18 – Eastern Washington at Western Illinois
Sept. 18 – South Dakota at Cal Poly

Against the Top 25

This past spring, MVFC teams combined for a total of 24 top-25 wins this year (six non-league games and 18 wins against league foes). Southern Illinois recorded the league's best non-league win, knocking off No. 3 Weber State in the playoffs.

2021 Missouri Valley Football Conference Weekly Release (August 31)

Success in Home Openers



The Redbirds have been very good at home under the leadership of head coach Brock Spack, especially in the home opener each season. ISU is 11-1 in the first game of the season at Hancock Stadium, which includes a home opening win over Butler by a score of 45-0 in 2017.

Hang Your Hat on Defense

The 2021 Illinois State squad will feature a defense that was one of the best in the MVFC and in the country in several categories last spring. The Redbirds ranked No. 4 in the FCS in pass efficiency defense (97.91), No. 7 in 3rd down conversion percentage defense (.288), and No. 10 in total defense. ISU was also No. 12 in the country in rushing defense (95.00), which also led the league. With nine starters returning on defense for the Redbirds this fall, one should expect that the defense will once again be something fans can count on each and every week.

Thomas Shines for Indiana State



Michael Thomas had two key interceptions as Indiana State beat Eastern Illinois, 26-21, in a Week Zero win Aug. 28. Thomas' second-half pick-six was the first Indiana State interception returned for a score since Rondell Green returned one 17 yards against Southern Illinois in 2017. His two interceptions were also the first time an Indiana State player recorded multiple interceptions since Anthony Tucker snagged two against Southern Illinois in 2017.

Hendrix Sets ISU Mark

Dante Hendrix established a new Indiana State record with a catch in 22 consecutive games, surpassing the mark set by Robert Tonyan Jr. in the 2015-16 seasons. Hendrix has now caught at least one pass in every game since the streak started in 2018 against Eastern Illinois (Sept. 15, 2018).

Vick Moves Up MSU Ladder



Damoriea Vick ranks 9th on MSU's career receptions list (114) and 13th in receiving yards (1,419). He has made 31 consecutive starts and last year ranked 2nd in the MVFC and 14th nationally in receiving yards (596).

New Faces for Missouri State

The Bears have 33 newcomers on their 2021 roster, including 12 transfers from four-year programs, 6 junior college transfers, and 15 true freshmen. Notably, a total of 15 Missouri State players have completed their undergraduate degrees and are currently pursuing post-graduate studies, including captains Kevin Ellis (DL, Fort Worth, Texas) and Titus Wall (S, Plano, Texas).

Opening on the Road



North Dakota is opening its season on the road for the first time since 2017 and seeking its first season-opening win on the road since 2015 when UND upset Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) member Wyoming, 24-13. The Fighting Hawks are 4-3 under Head Coach Bubba Schweigert in season-openers.

Key Returners on Defense

The UND defense averaged 3.43 sacks per game during the Spring 2021 season and returns 23 of their 24 sacks from a season ago. The Fighting Hawks only lose three tackles for loss from last year's team as well.

Starting in the Top 10

North Dakota enters the season ranked No. 8 in the Stats Perform Poll and No. 7 in FCS Coaches Poll, the first time since 2017 that the Fighting Hawks have entered Week One ranked inside the top-10.

Patterson Named Starting QB



Virginia Tech transfer Quincy Patterson will be North Dakota State's new starting quarterback for this week's season opener against Albany. Patterson is a 6-foot-3, 246-pound junior from Chicago with three years of eligibility remaining. He transferred from Virginia Tech in time for the spring 2021 season but

was ineligible to play for NDSU after appearing in three games during the fall 2020 season for the Hokies. Patterson played in 13 games over three seasons for Virginia Tech from 2018 to 2020, including one start as a redshirt freshman in 2019 at Notre Dame, where he completed nine passes for a career-best 139 yards.

Home Field Advantage

The Bison enter 2021 with a 167-27 record in the Fargodome, 29-5 at home against FCS Top 10 ranked teams, and winners of 70 of the last 72 home games over non-conference opponents. NDSU has a 28-1 record in the Fargodome during the NCAA playoffs since 2010 with the only loss coming to eventual national champion James Madison in the 2016 semifinals. NDSU's 32-game home winning streak in the Fargodome from September 2017 through April 2021 was the fourth longest in NCAA FCS history.

Bison Return to Twin Cities

NDSU announced earlier this summer that the Bison will host Eastern Washington on the opening weekend of the 2023 season at U.S. Bank Stadium, home of the Minnesota Vikings. NDSU drew a crowd of 34,544 fans to the 2019 season opener against Butler at Target Field, home of the Minnesota Twins. NDSU counts nearly 15,000 alumni in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area and 26,000 across the state of Minnesota.

22 Starters Return

The Panthers return all 22 offensive and defensive starters from last season. Making his presence felt in the backfield, DT Jared Brinkman has 27 tackles for loss in his career, pushing opposing offensive back 122 yards, 9th in the UNI career record book.

2020-21 Valley Football Teams in the Top 25

Team	Pre	F22	M1	M8	M15	M22	M29	A5	A12	A19
Illinois State	9	7	15	22	rv	rv	--	--	--	--
Indiana St.	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Missouri St.	--	--	--	--	rv	rv	19	15	14	12
UND	rv	14	4	3	2	5	6	6	6	6
NDSU	1	1	6	5	4	2	2	2	2	6
UNI	3	5	3	4	10	22	20	21	23	24
S. Dakota	--	--	20	21	rv	--	--	--	--	--
SDSU	5	3	8	8	6	4	4	4	4	2
S. Illinois	24	rv	11	10	5	10	18	16	17	14
W. Illinois	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Youngstown	rv	rv	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

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

Big-Play Weston

A big-play machine, Isaiah Weston has caught 72 passes for 1,585 career yards. His 22.0 yards per catch is 7th in the UNI career record book.

Coyotes Open at Kansas



South Dakota begins the 2021 fall campaign Friday night against the Kansas Jayhawks in Lawrence, Kansas. It is a rematch from a game played eight years ago when the Coyotes led 7-0 after one quarter, trailed 14-7 at halftime and lost 31-14. The two teams combined for 503 yards rushing and just 177 yards passing. The Coyotes have faced an FBS program every (non-COVID) year since 2010 and have wins against Minnesota (2010) and Bowling Green (2017) in that span. Future schedules include trips to Kansas State (2022), Missouri (2023), Wisconsin (2024) and Iowa State (2025).

Homecoming for Theis

Running back Travis Theis is scheduled to make his first collegiate start, and it comes against a team from his home state. Theis is a Pratt, Kansas, native and was the 2018 Kansas All-Classes Offensive Player of the Year. His high school career included 841 carries for 6,744 yards and 101 touchdowns.

In the Classroom



Former South Dakota State linebacker Preston Tetzlaff was honored in mid-August as one of two Football Championship Subdivision Athletics Directors Association Scholar-Athletes of the Year. With this honor, Tetzlaff also will receive a \$5,000 postgraduate scholarship. A Brookings native, Tetzlaff graduated with a Bachelor of Science in business economics with a 3.92 GPA. Tetzlaff finished his senior season with 64 tackles and one fumble recovery. He is continuing his education by entering law school at the University of Nebraska.

SDSU Ties Mark at No. 3

South Dakota State has matched its highest-ever ranking in a Football Championship Subdivision preseason poll, checking in at No. 3 in the Stats Perform survey. The Jackrabbits also were tabbed third in both 2018 and 2019, while holding a fifth-place ranking in the initial poll last season. SDSU is coming off a 2020-21 season in which the Jackrabbits reached the FCS title game for the first time in program history. SDSU kicks off the 2021 slate Sept. 3 at Colorado State.

War for the Wheel



No. 7/10-ranked Southern Illinois opens its season at SEMO on Thursday at 6:30 p.m. at Houck Stadium in the annual War For The Wheel rivalry game. The game will be televised on ESPN+. The game versus the Redhawks is the 89th between the two schools and it is the 43rd game played between the two teams in Cape Girardeau, Missouri.

Open Season

Since 2010, SIU is 6-5 in season openers. Since the opening game of the 2009 season at Marshall, the Salukis are 2-6 when they open the season on the road. The last time SIU opened a season with a road victory was August 30, 2018 when it won 49-10 at Murray St. The Salukis are 5-7 all time when they open the season at SEMO. SIU is 3-2 in its 5 season openers under current head coach Nick Hill. Hill's teams are 1-2 in road season openers and 1-1 versus SEMO on opening night.

Western Illinois Captains



This past Saturday (Aug. 28), the program announced its team captains for the 2021 fall season. A group of seven – Dennis Houston, Michael Lawson, Brandon Malkow, Jalen Powe, Eryk Preston, Connor Sampson, and Tony Tate – were voted to lead this year's group. Sampson enters his third season of captaincy, while Tate and Preston earned the title for a second consecutive year.

Western has added a handful of new faces to its roster this year, rounding up to 28 total newcomers

Top Returning Leathernecks

Western brings back a strong returning core of wide receivers, led by seniors Dallas Daniels, Dennis Houston, and Tony Tate. The trio found their names on lists of rankings during the 2021 spring season – all three ranked in the Top 5 in the league in receptions per game. Tate led the MVFC in all-purpose yards per game. Notably, WIU led the MVFC in fumbles recovered during 2020-21, with seven total. Two of those were credited to Nick D'Ambra, who returns as a junior slotback.

Non-Conference Home Success



YSU has won 37 of its last 39 non-conference home games since September 2004. The two setbacks came against Liberty in 2008 (31-28) and Butler in 2018 (23-21). Since falling to the Flames on Sept. 27, 2008, the Penguins had won 20 straight at home against non-conference foes until a loss to the Bulldogs in 2018. Both defeats came on final-play field goals. YSU's last non-conference game was on Sept. 28, 2019 against Robert Morris.

Texas Visitors

The Penguins have played only one team from Texas in the history of Stambaugh Stadium - Stephen F. Austin. The Penguins played host to the Lumberjacks in 1994 and 1995. Prior to that time, that last team from the Lone Star State to come to Youngstown was in 1963. In 1963, YSU played host to McMurry and Texas Lutheran at Rayen Stadium. The Penguins beat McMurry in October after losing to Texas Lutheran in September.

Other teams from Texas to visit Youngstown were Abilene Christian, Midwestern Texas and North Texas State all came up north in the 1950s.

YSU Transfers

YSU picked up some key transfers entering the fall season. Joining the program to bolster some numbers were WR Bryce Oliver (Kentucky), WR Jorge Portorreal (Lehigh), OL Mike Morris (Kent State), OL Nick Sabrin (Notre Dame - Ohio), DB Elijah Curtis (Army), OL Ryan Johnson (Duquesne) and DE JT Nganum (Glenville State). Unfortunately, Nganum suffered a season-ending knee injury in August.