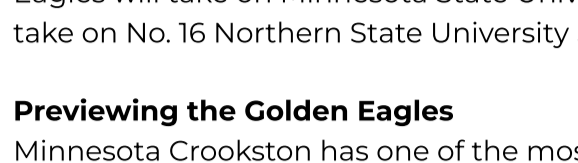


Men's Basketball | 12/7/2017 11:50:00 AM | Shawn D. Smith, Director of Athletic Media Relations

# Minnesota Crookston Looks to Continue Strong Start as they Trek to MSU Moorhead and No. 16 Northern State



## The Scoop

The University of Minnesota Crookston men's basketball team will hit the road for their first time in conference as they take on two of the perennial leaders in the NSIC North. The Golden Eagles will take on Minnesota State University Moorhead Fri., Dec. 8 at 8 p.m. They will then take on No. 16 Northern State University Sat., Dec. 9 at 6 p.m.

## Previewing the Golden Eagles

Minnesota Crookston has one of the most potent offenses in the league averaging 84.8 points per game. The key will be defense for a Golden Eagle team that has been inconsistent on that end of the ball. The Golden Eagles have been improving lately as they have held their opponents to a 70.0 point average in the last four games. Minnesota Crookston is holding foes to a 77.0 point average on the season.

The Golden Eagles are led by sophomore Harrison Cleary, who is second in the NSIC in scoring with 231 points per game. Cleary is also averaging 5.2 points and 4.9 rebounds per game. The 2016-17 NSIC Freshman of the Year is shooting 46.5 percent from the field and 48.7 percent from beyond the arc. He has also been clutch from the charity stripe where he is hitting at a 95.7 percent clip.

Alan Hodge, Jr. has also been clutch for Minnesota Crookston with his 19.1 points per game and 43.6 percent shooting from beyond the arc, while Chase Knickerbocker is averaging 12.8 points per game and shooting 42.0 percent from behind the three-point line.

Ben Juhl, a freshman from Clive, Iowa, continues to show improvement for the Golden Eagles. He comes in tallying 10.7 points per game. In the post, Gable Smith leads the way with 8.1 points and 6.8 rebounds per game. Smith has also been a major impact defensively as he leads the league with 29 blocked shots this season.

Off of the bench, Minnesota Crookston looks to 6-10 giant Javier Nicolau, who is averaging 6.0 points and 3.0 rebounds per game in the last two games. In addition, Darin Viken has been crucial off of the bench with his energy and defense, while Nate Lorenz has shown improvement with 3.3 points and 3.0 rebounds per game over the last three games.

Minnesota Crookston comes into the weekend shooting 49.3 percent from the field, 41.7 percent from beyond the arc and 76.4 percent from the charity stripe. The Golden Eagles are out-rebounding their foes by a narrow margin of 35.2 to 35.0.

## Previewing the Dragons

MSU Moorhead is coming off a 24-6 mark and a NCAA Regional berth last season. The Dragons have had some struggles out of the gate in 2017-18 as they are 3-5 (1-1 NSIC) heading into the weekend. MSU Moorhead had to replace over 50 percent of their scoring heading into this season. The Dragons are led by guard Tanner Kretchman, who is averaging 17.6 points per game and shooting 40.7 percent from beyond the arc. Johnny Beeninga has come on strong in his sophomore season, as he is tallying 13.8 points per game on the year. Evan Hines comes in averaging 12.3 points and 7.9 rebounds, while University of Tennessee-Martin transfer Travaun Coad is averaging 12.1 points and 5.4 rebounds per game.

In the post, Matt Anderson is averaging 9.8 points, while Addison Park is tallying 9.5 points per game. The Dragons are averaging 79.4 points per game, while their defense has struggled giving up 85.1 points per game. MSU Moorhead is shooting 47.1 percent from the field, 31.7 percent from beyond the arc and 74.2 percent from the charity stripe. MSU Moorhead is being out-rebounded on the season 37.6 to 34.5. They have also struggled holding on to the ball as they are tallying 11.4 turnovers per game.

The Dragons have owned the last 10 games as Coach [Dan Weisse](#) has yet to defeat his former employer where he was an assistant coach. The Golden Eagles last defeated the Dragons Jan. 28, 2012.

## Previewing the Wolves

Northern State is off to a great start for the 2017-18 season. The Wolves are currently ranked No. 16 in the nation with their 8-1 (2-0 NSIC) record. Northern State is led by guard Ian Smith, who is averaging 13.1 points per game and shooting 45.8 percent from beyond the arc. In addition, D.J. Pollard is averaging 11.0 points and 5.2 rebounds per game. Pollard has been crucial from distance where he is hitting at 57.1 percent clip coming into the weekend. 6-10 post Carter Evans has been a key factor for Northern State with 10.9 points and 5.4 rebounds per game. South Dakota State transfer Logan Doyle has also been a major factor for the Wolves with 8.7 points and 7.9 rebounds.

The Wolves are averaging 74.0 points per game, while their defense has limited foes to just 60.8 points per game. Northern State is shooting 47.8 percent from the field, 38.4 percent from beyond the arc and 68.1 percent from the charity stripe. The Wolves have allowed the boards on the season with a 38.1 rebounds per game average, compared to just 31.4 rebounds per game for their opponents.

Northern State has controlled the series of late as they have taken the last 10 games. The Golden Eagles last defeated the Wolves Feb. 4, 2012.

## Great Start

Minnesota Crookston is off to their best start since the 2010-11 season with their 5-4 record. The Golden Eagles will look to build on their great start heading into the weekend. Minnesota Crookston The quickest Minnesota Crookston has ever reached six wins in their history was during the 2014-15 season when they picked up their sixth victory Jan. 2, 2015 over University of Mary. That was Head Coach [Dan Weisse's](#) first season leading the program.

## Defense Is Key

Defense has been key for the Golden Eagles this season as it has been a defining factor in their wins versus their losses. Minnesota Crookston is limiting opponents to 70.6 points per game in their four victories. On the reverse side, the Golden Eagles have allowed their foes to score an average of 85.3 points in their four losses. The Golden Eagles will look to be more consistent on defense as they head into another crucial NSIC weekend.

## Minnesota Crookston Golden Eagles

**Head Coach:** [Dan Weisse](#)  
**Record at UMC:** **22-68 Season at UMC: Fourth Season**

## MSU Moorhead Dragons

**Head Coach:** **Chad Walthall**  
**Record at MSUM:** **168-62 Season at MSUM: Eighth Season**

## Northern State Wolves

**Head Coach:** **Paul Sather**  
**Record at NSU:** **134-79 Season at NSU: Eighth Season**

## Minnesota Crookston at MSU Moorhead

**Fri., Dec. 8, 8 p.m., Alex Nemzek Fieldhouse (2,200)**  
**Live Stats (Friday):** <http://web.mnstate.edu/livestats/basketball/xlive.htm>  
**Video:** <https://portal.stretchinternet.com/msum/#liveEventsTab>  
**TV (Friday):** WDAY XTRA

## Minnesota Crookston at No. 16 Northern State

**Sat., Dec. 9, 6 p.m., Wachs Arena (8,057)**  
**Live Stats (Saturday):** <http://sidearmstats.com/northern/mbball/>  
**Video (Saturday):** <https://portal.stretchinternet.com/northern/>  
**Radio (Saturday):** 1260 KROX AM/105.7 FM

## Series against MSUM: MSU Moorhead leads 29-7 in NCAA Division II era

**Last: MSU Moorhead won both game last year, 82-81 in Crookston and 103-68 in Moorhead**  
**Recent Trends: MSU Moorhead has won 10 straight. Last win came Jan. 28, 2012**  
**Series against UMD: Northern State leads 33-2 in NCAA Division II era**  
**Last: Northern State swept the series last year, 109-68 in Crookston and 85-80 in Aberdeen**

## Recent Trends: Northern State has won 10 straight. Last win came Feb. 4, 2012

**Officials (Friday):** Luke Schumer, Ted Krize, Chris Koopman  
**Officials (Saturday):** Chad Bjornson, Levi Pearson, Jim Ricketts

## Minnesota Crookston Projected Starters

So. PG 0 Harrison Cleary, 6-1, Oak Creek, Wis. 23.1 PPG, 5.2 RPG, 4.9 APG  
 Jr. SG 1 Alan Hodge, Jr., 6-0, Dallas, Texas 19.1 PPG, 3.4 RPG  
 Fr. 3G 2 Ben Juhl, 6-1, Clive, Iowa 10.7 PPG, 3.0 RPG  
 Jr. SF 25 Chase Knickerbocker, 6-7, Annandale, Minn. 12.8 PPG, 4.9 RPG  
 R-Jr. PF 24 Gable Smith, 6-7, Lodi, Wis. 8.1 PPG, 6.8 RPG

## Top Bench Players

Jr. G 13 Darin Viken, 6-1, Fosston, Minn. 2.0 PPG, 2.4 RPG  
 So. F/C 44 Javier Nicolau, 6-10, Castellon, Spain 3.7 PPG, 3.1 RPG  
 Jr. F/C 34 Nate Lorenz, 6-7, Breckenridge, Minn. 2.7 PPG, 1.3 RPG

## MSU Moorhead Projected Starters

Sr. PG 3 Tanner Kretchman, 6-0, Fargo, N.D. 17.6 PPG, 3.4 RPG, 3.3 APG  
 So. SG 1 Johnny Beeninga, 6-1, Maple Grove, Minn. 13.8 PPG, 2.6 RPG  
 Jr. 3G 5 Travaun Coad, 6-1, Redding, Pa. 12.1 PPG, 5.4 RPG  
 So. SF 12 Matt Anderson, 6-7, Fall Creek, Wis. 9.5 PPG, 3.5 RPG  
 Jr. PF 41 Addison Park, 6-8, Sioux Falls, S.D. 9.5 PPG, 3.9 RPG

## Top Bench Players

So. G 24 Evan Hines, 6-3, Skokie, Ill. 12.3 PPG, 7.9 RPG  
 Jr. G 11 A.J. Nywesh, 6-3, Austin, Minn. 1.6 PPG, 0.9 RPG  
 Jr. C/F 15 Briton Bussman, 6-4, Milnor, N.D. 1.5 PPG, 1.1 RPG

## Northern State Projected Starters

R-Jr. PG 0 Ian Smith, 5-10 165, Brooklyn Park, Minn. 13.1 PPG, 4.3 RPG, 4.0 APG  
 R-Sr. SG 11 D.J. Pollard, 6-4 180, St. Louis Park, Minn. 11.0 PPG, 5.2 RPG  
 R-Sr. 3G 22 Darin Peterka, 6-4 190, Miller, S.D. 9.8 PPG, 3.6 RPG  
 So. SF 11 Gabe King, 6-5 185, Irene, S.D. 7.9 PPG, 2.4 RPG  
 Sr. PF 35 Logan Doyle, 6-8 225, Alexandria, Minn. 8.7 PPG, 7.9 RPG

## Top Bench Players

Sr. F/C 54 Carter Evans, 6-10 250, Rochester, Minn. 10.9 PPG, 5.4 RPG  
 Jr. C/F 15 Bo Fries, 6-4 195, Langford, S.D. 5.0 PPG, 2.3 RPG  
 Jr. F 23 Justin Decker, 6-7 225, Huron, S.D. 5.3 PPG, 2.7 RPG  
 Fr. G 3 Andrew Kallman, 6-4 175, Chaska, Minn. 3.7 PPG, 1.1 RPG

## #SStoryLines

1. Can the Golden Eagles get the ball movement and defense that they have had in several of their wins?  
 2. Will Harrison Cleary continue his strong start to his sophomore campaign?  
 3. Can the Golden Eagles limit Northern State in the post and control their shooters?  
 4. Will Minnesota Crookston be able to limit MSU Moorhead's Tanner Kretchman?  
 5. Can the Golden Eagles get big games in the post from Gable Smith, Javier Nicolau and Nate Lorenz?

## #ShiningAsASophomore

Minnesota Crookston sophomore guard Harrison Cleary has overcome the sophomore slump in his second season as a Golden Eagle. Cleary was NSIC Freshman of the Year last season. He is second in the entire NSIC as he is scoring 23.1 points per game. Cleary has scored 20 or more points in five games this season. He scored a season-high 36 points at Jamestown. Cleary has also been a major impact as a point guard as he is averaging 4.9 assists per game. He is also bringing down 5.2 rebounds per game.

## #ChaselsOnTheCase

Minnesota Crookston junior Chase Knickerbocker has had a strong start to his junior season. The Annandale, Minn., native is averaging 12.8 points and 4.9 rebounds per game on the season. He has been a major impact beyond the arc where he is hitting at a 42.0 percent clip. Knickerbocker tallied a season-high 20 points in a win over University of Minnesota Duluth last weekend, the program's first win over UMD since Dec. 6, 2013. Knickerbocker has notched double-figure scoring seven times this season.

## #SinkTheThree

Minnesota Crookston junior transfer Alan Hodge, Jr. has made an instant impact for the Golden Eagles. Hodge is averaging 19.1 points per game on the season. Hodge leads the team in three-point shooting as he is hitting at a 43.6 percent clip this season. He has averaged 26.0 points per game in the last two games. He shot 7-of-12 from beyond the arc for 58.3 percent from beyond the arc in those two games. Hodge has tallied 20 or more points in six games this season.

## #CrownJuhl

Minnesota Crookston guard Ben Juhl is off to a strong start to his freshman season. The lawnative is averaging 10.7 points per game on the year. Juhl has been especially clutch in the last two games with 14.0 points per game. He is shooting 4-of-8 for 50.0 percent from beyond the arc in those two games. Juhl has worked his way in the starting line-up in the last five games. He will look to have a major impact this weekend.  
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