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Wednesday, 28 November 2012 18:29

No. 15 Illinois State (8-3, 5-3 Missouri Valley Football Conference) experienced very different emotions this season during the Football Championship Subdivision playoffs selection show on ESPNU compared to last year when it was left out of the playoffs.

The Redbirds learned on Selection Sunday that they will travel to Boone, N.C. to take on No. 6 Appalachian State (8-3, 6-2 Southern Conference) in the second round of the FCS playoffs at 1 p.m. on Saturday, and the game will be televised on ESPN3.

The Redbirds are making their first playoff appearance since 2006 and fourth overall in school history. The team's mindset going into the playoffs is to think of it as a second season and a new slate opening with a 0-0 record.

"What happened the last 11 games is in the past," ISU senior quarterback Matt Brown said. "It is a fresh start, and we are moving on and looking forward to this new challenge."

Unlike facing off against the same regular-season conference foes year after year and familiar non-conference opponents from the Midwest, the Redbirds have the chance to travel outside of the region for this playoff game against an unfamiliar opponent.

"We are looking forward to traveling outside of the area and representing the Missouri Valley Football Conference well," ISU senior wide receiver Tyrone Walker said.

ISU will be facing off against an FCS power in the Mountaineers that has a tradition of winning. ASU has earned a record-tying 12 Southern Conference championships and it won three straight FCS national championships from 2005-07. The 2007 campaign included a 34-32 victory over No. 5 Michigan in Ann Arbor, Mich.

"It is always exciting to play against a program with that kind of tradition that beat a big school like Michigan in the past and with the success they have had in FCS," Brown said.

The Mountaineers' home field, Kidd Brewer Stadium, has an official listed capacity of 24,050, but they regularly have over-
capacity crowds. Going into the 2012 season, ASU had 40 consecutive regular-season contests with over-capacity crowds dating back to 2005. ASU has been the leader in attendance at the FCS level for four out of the last five years with an average of 26,211 people per game.

But the Redbirds have confidence heading into the matchup with an unblemished 5-0 mark away from Hancock Stadium.

"We are looking to keep our undefeated record away on the road in place," Walker said. "It is going to be a good experience to play in their big-time college football atmosphere, and we are not going to be bothered by their fans."

The Mountaineers and Redbirds have never played one another, but ISU holds a 1-7 all-time record against members of ASU's league, the Southern Conference.

The Mountaineers opened the season with a 1-2 record but finished the season winning seven out of their last eight contests. ASU's slate has featured six ranked opponents, including ISU.

Under center for ASU will be junior quarterback Jamal Jackson, a Walter Payton Award nominee and member of the Southern Conference first-team. Wide out Sean Price, a Jerry Rice Award candidate and Southern Conference freshman of the year, leads the receiving corps for the Mountaineers.

Two Buck Buchanan Award candidates head the ASU defensive unit including senior linebacker Jeremy Kimbrough (Southern Conference co-defensive player of the year) and senior defensive back Demetrius McCray (member of Southern Conference first-team defense).