Back-to-back road games, a 12-hour bus ride, little sleep and a dangerous nonconference opponent.

Those are things that didn’t affect the Montana State University-Northern men’s basketball team in an 88-39 win over Concordia College of Alberta Sunday night at the MSU-Northern Fieldhouse. The Lights romped to victory in their first home game since Nov. 7, and they did it on the heels of two tough games in Lewiston, Idaho over the weekend.

“There were a lot of things that were different about this game and things we hard to guard against,” Northern head coach Shawn Huse said. “With the road trip we were on this weekend, the long ride home, then, the fact that we were the more talented team tonight, it would have been easy to get complacent or lazy and have a letdown. But I’m proud of the way our guys came out tonight. They came out with a lot of energy and they played hard right away and that set the tone for the rest of the night.”

The tone was indeed set early.

The Lights and Thunder seesawed for the first six minutes of the game, but then sophomore Devin Jackson went on an 8-0 run of his own, hitting two 3-pointers and a full-court layup. Jackson catching fire gave the Lights a 15-6 early lead, and they piggybacked one run with a 14-0 run later in the half, capped off by another Jackson three, which was part of a game-high 27 points for the hot-shooting guard from Denver. And by the time the first-half onslaught ended, the Lights were in front 41-14.

And they didn’t look back either. Chris Brown came off the bench to give Northern a boost in the paint, and the MSU-N defense had its second straight great game, holding the Thunder to just 11 points in the second half.

"In reality, Concordia played us pretty much even for the first 10 minutes,” Huse said. "They are a solid team. But once we got the lead, the thing I was most pleased with is, we played well with it. When you get that big of a lead, sometimes you get silly and sloppy, but I credit our guys for playing Northern basketball tonight.”

While Jackson was a scintillating 6-for-6 from beyond the arc, Brown was equally lethal in the paint, going 7-of-8 from the field for 15 points. Joe Simpson added seven points and six rebounds, while Shaun Tatarka scored eight points for a Northern club which improved to 8-4 on the season.

And Sunday night’s win was impressive considering what the Lights went through over the weekend.

On Friday night, the Lights lost to ninth-ranked Azusa Pacific 84-72 at the Lewis-Clark Holiday Tournament, but quickly rebounded to thrash Portland Bible College 80-30 on Saturday night.

Against Azusa, the Lights were outsized, but Huse said his team played the Cougars even except for the first 10 minutes of the game. Northern dug itself a hole it couldn’t claw all the way back from, despite only being down five points with seven minutes left in the game.
“Obviously, Azusa is a very good team,” Huse said. “But we feel like we could have made it a much different game had we gotten off to a better start. And at the end of the day, we just shot the ball too poorly to come all the way back. And against a team that talented and with so much size, you just can’t afford to shoot it as poorly as we did or start the game as poorly as we did.”

And Northern was resilient in Idaho, bouncing back to crush the Wildcats from Portland.

After the Lights got a game-high 18 points from Tatarka against Azusa, he poured in a game-high 21 against the Wildcats on Saturday night. LaVon Myers chipped in with 15 in the win over the Wildcats, while Jackson added 12 points and seven rebounds.

“Again, we played Northern basketball on Saturday night,” Huse said. “We played very physical and with a lot of energy. Our guys took the loss to Azusa personal, and they were disappointed that we didn’t play as well as we could have against them. It’s one of those situations where people look at a team like Azusa and expect them to beat us, but our players don’t look at it that way. They know they can play with anybody, so they were disappointed after that game.

“And because of that, I was very proud of the way they rebounded on Saturday night,” he added.

The Lights will continue their home stand on Wednesday night when they host Kings College of Alberta at 8 p.m. Northern is home for the remainder of the nonconference season, as the Lights are set to host the AmericInn Classic Dec. 29-30.

Jackson lights up Concordia
Lights are 8-4 after 2-1 weekend and Sunday night win

Lights 88, Concordia 39

CUCA — Brett Melnick 4-11 4-4 13, Reid Farlich 0-2 0-0 0, Dallas Wright 0-1 0-0 0, Milos Prijovic 1-5 3-4 5, Ethan Sir 2-7 3-3 7, Andrew McDonald 1-4 0-0 2, Jeremy Barrows 1-2 0-0 3, Rob Haack 0-0 1-2 1, Nathaniel Wojicki 1-3 2-4 5, Mitch Jones 1-3 1-2 3, Mat Jones 0-0 0-0 0, Alex Butts 0-2 0-0 0, Mike Vanson 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 11-40 14-19 39

MSU-N — David Maddock 2-6 0-0 6, Devin Jackson 8-8 5-5 27, Jordan Harris 4-6 4-4 12, Shaun Tatarka 3-12 0-0 8, LaVon Myers 3-5 0-0 7, Joe Simpson 2-3 3-5 7, Sean Kelly 1-1 0-0 2, Chris Brown 7-8 1-2 15, Ben Mitchell 2-5 0-0 4. Totals 32-54 13-16 88