Four straight: Lights run down Pronghorns
George Ferguson, Havre Daily News sports editor
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It would have been easy for the Montana State University-Northern men’s basketball team to let down following Wednesday night’s big win over Black Hills State.

Instead, at least for the first 30 minutes of Thursday night’s finale at the AmericInn Classic inside the MSU-Northern Fieldhouse, the Lights played even better.

Northern opened Thursday night’s game against the University of Lethbridge with seven straight points from junior Shaun Tatarka, and the Lights never looked back, crushing the Pronghorns 77-58.

“Shaun (Tatarka) got us going with the shots early on,” Northern head coach Shawn Huse said. “But what I was really proud of us was our defense to start the game. We did play well on offense, we really knocked down shots from the perimeter, but it was our effort and energy on defense which made the difference. To hold them (Horns) to 17 points in the first half. That was the game right there. So I’m really proud of our guys for coming out and playing that hard right at the start.”

While Northern stymied a Lethbridge squad which played Montana Tech to the wire just 24 hours earlier, the Pronghorns had no answer for the Lights’ shooters.

MSU-N knocked down nine of its 12 3-pointers in the first 20 minutes, including four from Tatarka, who finished with five triples and a game-high 18 points. With shot after shot falling from the likes of LaVon Myers, Devin Jackson and David Maddock as well, the Lights gradually built an insurmountable lead. And by the time Tatarka and Maddock hit back-to-back three’s to close out the half, the Lights were in front 42-17.

Lethbridge did chip away at the lead for some of a second half which included a lengthy scoreboard malfunction, but in the end, the Pronghorns were outgunned and Northern won going away.

“We may not have been as crisp as we would have liked in the second half,” Huse said. “But overall, I thought it was another balanced, team win, and the effort from our guys was very good for 40 minutes. So I was just really pleased overall.”

The Lights wound up shooting a blistering 54 percent from the floor on Wednesday night and had plenty of balance on offense. Maddock, who had two great games off the bench this week, finished with 16 points and four trey’s, while Myers added nine and Joe Simpson and Chris Brown chipped in with seven points each. On defense, the Lights held down a much bigger Lethbridge team and also forced the Pronghorns into 21 turnovers.

With two wins this week, the Lights finished non-league play with a 10-4 record, but perhaps more importantly, Northern appears to be peaking as it heads towards Frontier Conference play next week.

“These were two good wins against two teams we needed to play well against,” Huse said. “I’m proud of our guys for how they played this week, and while there’s always more work to do, we feel good about
how we’re playing as we go into the conference.”

The Lights open Frontier play with three straight road games. Northern plays its conference opener on Friday night against UGF in Great Falls.

**MSU-N shoots the three**

**Lights are 10-4 overall**

**Lights 77, Lethbridge 58**

**UL** — Randy Davis 5-5 9-10 19, Danhue Lawrence 4-11 2-2 10, Jeremy Stanley 0-1 0-0 0, Taner Murray 0-1 0-0 0, Quinn Van Gaalen 0-2 0-0 0, Tim McKinnon 0-0 0-0 0, Brandon Thomas-James 0-2 0-0 0, Abner Kamps 3-4 0-0 6, Wes Chapman 0-3 0-0 0, Derek Waldner 4-10 5-5 13, Nico Kovac 5-6 0-0 10. Totals 21-45 16-17 58

**MSU-N** — Maddock 6-12 0-0 16, Devin Jackson 2-6 2-4 7, Jordan Harris 0-3 0-0 0, Shaun Tatarka 6-13 1-3 18, LaVon Myers 3-11 1-2 9, Joe Simpson 3-4 2-2 8, Sean Kelly 1-3 2-2 4, Chris Brown 4-5 0-0 8, Ben Mitchell 3-3 1-2 7. Totals 28-60 9-15 77

Halftime: Lights 42-17. 3-pt FG: University of Lethbridge 0-6 (Lawrence 0-2, Stanley 0-1, Murray 0-1, Van Gaalen 0-1, Chapman 0-1), MSU-Northern 12-32 (Maddock 4-10, Jackson 1-5, Tatarka 5-11, Myers 2-6). Rebounds: University of Lethbridge 15, MSU-Northern 17. Fouled out: Kamps. Technical: none. Assists: University of Lethbridge 3 (Davis 2), MSU-Northern 9 (Tatarka 5). Steals: University of Lethbridge 4 (Lawrence 2), MSU-Northern 11 (Maddock 3). Blocked shots: University of Lethbridge 0, MSU-Northern 0. Turnovers: University of Lethbridge 21, MSU-Northern 9.