Lights drub Saints, again
George Ferguson, Havre Daily News sports editor
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It’s never easy to bounce back from a difficult and emotional loss. And it’s even more difficult when you’re playing arguably the hottest team in the NAIA in an emotional rivalry game.

But that’s exactly what the Montana State University-Northern men’s basketball team did on Friday night. In front of a packed and rowdy MSU-Northern Fieldhouse, the Lights blew away the No. 16 Carroll College Fighting Saints, 73-54 in a pivotal Frontier Conference showdown.

Northern turned what was a first-half slug fest, into a route in the final 20 minutes, and junior sharp shooter LaVon Myers was the catalyst. Myers pumped in a game-high 25 points, including four 3-pointers, and he gave Northern the cushion it needed at the end of the first half by scoring 11 straight points, including two three’s as the Lights eked ahead 27-20 at the break.

“It’s a good feeling to be able to shoot it like that in such an important game, a game that had the team, the crowd, the whole town excited,” Myers said. “It’s just one of those games when you start to get the hot hand, and you’re teammates start looking for you. So I have to give all the credit to them, they made great plays, they found me when I was open and the shots were going in. It was an important win for us, and it feels good.”

But Myers was just one of many reasons the Lights were able to crush the Saints yet again in Havre. Northern’s defense did a number on reigning NAIA Player of the Week Andy Garland, who was a non-factor for much of the night. Garland finished with 11 points, but five of those came after the game was out of reach. Garland was also in foul trouble for much of the second half.

And while shooting certainly propelled the Lights to victory (MSU-N shot 55 percent from the floor and 50 percent from beyond the arc” Lights head coach Shawn Huse was quick to credit the play of his big men on Friday night.

“The way we shot the ball was a big reason why we played so well and were able to win this game in the fashion we did,” Huse said. “But the game ball goes to our forwards in my opinion. The job they did on Andy Garland and Carroll’s big guys was tremendous. Our rebounding was outstanding, we played great defense, Sean Kelly made some big plays for us when we needed them, and Joe Simpson was a force on both ends all night long. So it’s always nice when we shoot it like that, but we wouldn’t have won this game the way we did without the play of our forwards and I’m extremely proud of them for their effort against an explosive Carroll team.”

Kelly may of put the nail in Carroll’s coffin when he slammed home a dunk at the 5:47 mark as the Lights went up 61-44. But he also nailed a 3-pointer as the shot clock expired earlier in the half, which followed two Devin Jackson three’s. That spurt was part of a 12-1 Northern run in the first four minutes of the second stanza and from there, the Lights were never threatened again.
“We just played a solid all-around game,” Huse said. “I think we defended really well, we rebounded well, we took care of the ball, and of course, we shot it at a great clip. So putting all those things together, it was a great night for us.

“But really, when you look at it, the thing I’m most proud of our guys for is their mental and emotional focus,” Huse said. “Because that first half was very tough, it was close and very physical. But once we got the lead, out guys were very poised and very focused and we played really well with it. That’s the sign of a team with some maturity and it was fun to see our guys play like that and I’m proud of them.”

Junior Shaun Tatarka scored 14 points and hit three trey’s, including a fast start to the game to go along with Myers’ 25 points. Jackson chipped in with 13 points, while Kelly added seven points and Simpson grabbed 10 rebounds. The Saints also got 11 points from Sam Cartmell and Tony Dalton.

With the win, and a Saturday night thrill over RMC, the Lights improved to 4-1 in Frontier play and 15-5 overall.

“It was a good experience,” Myers said. “My first Carroll game as part of the Lights’ family, it was exciting. And I’m just glad I could help my team get an important conference win.”

**Lights 73, Carroll 54**

**CC** — James MacIntyre 0-0 0-0 0, Taylor Janoe 0-0 0-0 0, Andy Garland 5-12 0-0 11, Chase Godecke 1-4 1-2 3, Ben Cutler 1-6 0-0 3, Byago Diouf 1-3 0-0 2, Sam Cartmell 4-9 2-3 11, Chris McGrath 0-2 0-0 0, Tony Dalton 4-8 3-5 11, Nick Jones 2-5 5-6 9, Jordan Reyes 2-2 0-1 4. Totals 20-51 11-17 54

**MSU-N** — David Maddock 1-1 2-2 4, Devin Jackson 4-10 2-2 13, Jordan Harris 0-0 0-0 0, Shaun Tatarka 5-8 1-2 14, LaVon Myers 6-11 9-9 25, Joe Simpson 0-2 2-2 2, Sean Kelly 2-4 2-2 7, Chris Brown 1-1 0-0 2, Ben Mitchell 3-3 0-0 6. Totals 22-40 18-19 73