Finally Home: MSU-Northern men return to Havre to host Augustana
Lights begin a month-long home stand on Saturday night
George Ferguson
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October 8th was a long time ago. So long ago in fact, fans may have forgotten just what the Montana State University-Northern men’s basketball team looked like.

On Saturday night, Northern fans will get a refresher course when the No. 15 Lights host the University of Alberta-Augustana in their first home game since they opened the season with a win over King’s University on Oct. 8.

The Lights are off to a 10-2 start this season, and one of those wins came against Augustana back on Nov. 12 in Lewiston, Idaho. The Lights pummeled the Vikings 91-54 at the Lewis-Clark State Tournament.

And now Northern gets the Vikings at home, a place the Lights have been away from for the last 11 games. MSU-N will play its next seven games at home and won't travel again until Jan. 19. During Northern’s tough road stretch, the Lights have steadily improved – especially since an early-season loss to Warner Pacific on Nov. 5 in Oregon. The Lights have won four straight since and are nearing the end of their nonconference schedule.

"I think we’ve made a big jump the last two weekends,” MSU-N head coach Shawn Huse said. "I think a loss, like the one we had at Warner, a game we felt we should have won, tends to refocus teams. It forces your guys to self evaluate a little harder. And since that loss to Warner, I think we’ve taken big strides and now we may even be ahead of where we were at this time last year."

Northern’s strides this season have included added depth. Sophomore Mike LaValley and redshirt-freshman Corbin Pearson are giving Northern added punch off the bench, but Huse also points to a couple of guys who contributed last year, but are doing even more so far this season.

"We’re definitely deeper with how Corbin and Mike are playing,” Huse said. "But even more so, it’s about the minutes that guys like Jordan Harris and Ben Mitchell are giving us this season. They both were key to what we did last year, but they are giving us even more quality minutes this season and that’s really big for our depth. They are both doing a really good job."

And not only is Northern deep, but again, the Lights are balanced this season. Heading into Saturday’s matchup with the Vikings, the Lights have six players averaging between 12 and eight points per game in Shaun Tatarka, Devin Jackson, Joe Simpson, LaVon Myers, David Maddock and Chris Brown. The Lights have had seven games where 10 players or more have reached the box score.

Meanwhile, the Vikings, who play at undefeated UGF tonight, come into the weekend having played some tough opponents, so they’ll be battle tested and will try to give the Lights a tough welcome home.

“We’ll be focused and we’ll be ready,” Huse said. “We don’t overlook any team. This team has always been good about respecting our opponents and being ready to play one game at a time. It’s certainly a good feeling to finally be playing in our own gym and we’re excited about the next month playing at home.”
Saturday night’s game between the Lights and Vikings will tip off at 7 p.m. at the MSU-Northern Fieldhouse. The Lights host Dickinson State University next Thursday night.