MSU-N men romp past Augustana

George Ferguson  
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The Montana State University-Northern men’s basketball team was just two months shy of its last home game when the Lights took the floor Saturday night in Havre. But it didn’t take long for Northern to get reacquainted with the friendly confines of the MSU-Northern Fieldhouse.

In their first home games since Oct. 8, the Lights dispatched the University of Alberta Augustana 95-53 to improve to 11-2 on the season Saturday night. The win was the second over the Vikings this season and it was also the Lights fifth straight victory.

“It was so nice playing at home again,” Northern senior guard LaVon Myers said. “We have been on the road for the last month or so, so playing here in Havre, in front of our own fans was great for us. We wanted to get the fans excited again for our season and get them excited for the rest of our home games coming up.”

Another benefit of Saturday’s trouncing of Augustana was that every Northern player who dressed for the game played significant minutes. Northern head coach Shawn Huse was able to do that because the Lights quickly raced out to a huge first-half lead. By the time the first 20 minutes were in the books, the Lights were ahead 52-24 and they were never threatened in the second half.

“It was great to give the guys an opportunity to get in there and get some minutes, especially Pat Jensen and Baird Henning,” Huse said. “We haven’t had a chance to do that much here lately, so nights like this are good to get everybody in the mix of things.”

Three players reached double figures for the Lights, led by Shaun Tatarka and Devin Jackson. Tatarka poured in a game-high 16 points and Jackson added 15. Tatarka’s night included four made 3-pointers. The Lights also got a big effort from Sean Kelly, who scored 12 points and missed just one field goal attempt. Joe Simpson added eight points and seven rebounds, while Jordan Harris and Chris Brown scored eight apiece as well.

The Lights were efficient on both ends of the floor. Northern shot a season-high 58 percent from the field, while the Lights’ defense held the Vikings to just 39 percent shooting.

“We just felt like we had to play Northern basketball,” Huse said. “We really challenged ourselves to execute and try some different things offensively, things we don’t normally do or get a chance to work on. We really focused on how well we could execute at every position and really just challenged ourselves.

“We are always keeping in mind the big picture. We have played this team off and on over the years and they are getting better,” he added. “They aren’t at our caliber yet obviously, but they are getting better and making us really work for things, and that is good. We are keeping our eye on the bigger picture and we know that next week we have a tough game with Dickinson coming in here. We wanted to play like we were playing anybody in the Frontier.”
Saturday’s win at home marked the start of a stretch of seven straight games in Havre for the Lights. That includes the start of Frontier Conference play in January, as the Lights won’t have to go one the road until Jan. 19.

Next up for the Lights is a rematch with the Dickinson State Blue Hawks on Thursday night at 7 p.m. The Lights beat the Blue Hawks, who are joining the Frontier next fall, back on Oct. 28 in Dillon.

Note: Daniel Horton contributed to this story.

Lights 95, Augustana 53

UAA — Michael Swampy 1-4 0-0 2, David Shantz 4-10 0-0 8, S Irving 0-2 0-0 0, Adam Lehners 0-0 0-0 0, David Chytracek 2-6 0-0 6, Taylor Foreman 4-8 0-0 8, Logan Gray 3-3 0-0 6, Lee Danderfer 4-11 0-1 11, Jamin Lockert 0-1 0-0 0, Landon Vaneck 0-0 0-0 0, Shayn Bruney 2-6 8-10 12, L Hudson 0-1 0-0 0. Totals 20-52 8-11 53.

MSU-N — David Maddock 2-3 0-0 6, Devin Jackson 6-9 2-2 15, Jordan Harris 4-6 0-0 8, Shaun Tatarka 6-13 0-0 16, LaVon Myers 1-3 2-2 5, Sean Kelly 4-5 4-5 12, Mike LaValley 3-4 0-0 7, Chris Brown 4-5 0-0 8, Joe Simpson 4-8 0-0 8, Ben Mitchell 2-6 0-0 4, Pat Jensen 1-1 0-0 2, Baird Henning 1-1 0-0 2, Corbin Pearson 1-3 0-0 2. Totals 39-67 8-9 95.

Halftime: Northern 52-24. 3-pt FG: MSU-N 9-20 (Maddock 2-3, Jackson 1-3, Tatarka 4-9, Myers 1-2, Kelly 0-1, LaValley 1-1, Mitchell 0-1). Rebounds: MSU-N 34 (Simpson 7). Fouls Univ of Alberta@Augustana 6, MSU-N 7. Fouled out: none.