

Lights ground DSU with three's

George Ferguson

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Given how tough the Dickinson State Blue Hawks played against the Montana State University-Northern men's basketball team back in October, the Lights certainly weren't expecting to blow out DSU the second time around.

DSU on the other hand, may not have expected Northern to hit a season-high 15 3-pointers either. Yet, that's exactly how things unfolded as the No. 17 Lights improved to 11-2 in what was their last meeting with DSU before the Blue Hawks join the Frontier Conference next season. On Thursday night at the MSU-Northern Fieldhouse, the Lights dispatched the Blue Hawks 78-48 in front of a boisterous student section and a large week-night crowd.

"I don't think people will really realize how different this game might have been had we not shot the ball as well as we did and had their big guy (Matthew Lee) not gotten into early foul trouble. Dickinson is just a very good, hard-nosed physical basketball team and we were very fortunate tonight. It was one of those night's that things all came together."

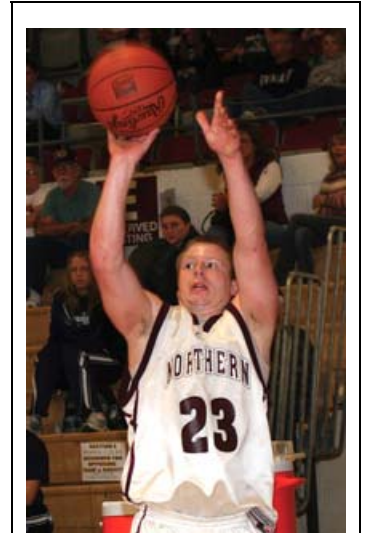
Actually, the Lights made their own fortune on Thursday night, through some hot shooting from the outside, and a hustling, tough defensive effort.

Northern grabbed a quick 21-10 lead behind back-to-back 3-pointers from Shaun Tatarka, as well as bombs by Devin Jackson and LaVon Myers. At the same time, Lee, who scored 30 points against the Lights the last time out, was on the bench with two quick fouls. He wound up a non-factor as he stayed in foul trouble and finished the game with 10 points and three rebounds.

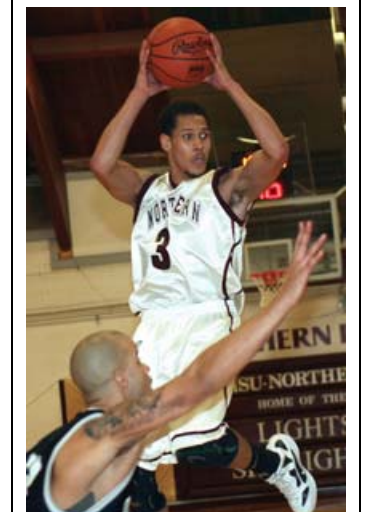
But Northern finished the first half just as strong as an early 10-2 run. The Lights ended the half with more three's from Tatarka and Jackson and outscored the Blue Hawks 15-3 in the final nine minutes. DSU went eight straight minutes without a field goal in that stretch as the Lights led 40-20 at the break. MSU-N ballooned the lead to 30 points early in the second half and every Light who dressed wound up getting quality minutes because of the Lights ability to maintain the huge lead.

"It was a really good start for us," Huse said. "Our shooters got going and when that happens, things really open up for us. But I was really proud of how we defended. DSU is a tough, physical basketball team who will get after you. But, as coach (Travis) Noble mentioned, we were in a lot of pile-ups tonight. We made it look like a football game at times because we had guys diving on the floor right to the end of the game. And we won our share of those 50-50 balls and with a team like Dickinson, that's not always the case because they play so hard. So I was extremely proud of that effort by every one of our guys tonight."

Tatarka finished with a game-high 21 points and six three's. Jackson was right there with 19 points and five triples, while Sean Kelly chipped in with 10 points. Myers and David Maddock each hit three's and chipped in with a combined 12 points. Defensively, Northern forced DSU into 21 turnovers and held the



Northern senior guard Shaun Tatarka lets go of one of his six made 3-pointers during Thursday night's game between the Lights and Blue Hawks in Havre.



MSU-Northern's David Maddock grabs a rebound during a men's college basketball game against Dickinson State Thursday night in Havre. The Lights thrashed DSU.

Blue Hawks to a measly 11 percent shooting from three. The effort gave Northern a season sweep of DSU for the second straight year.

"I thought our guys were really focused tonight," Huse said. "They came out and really wanted to play well tonight because they were fully aware of how good Dickinson can be.

"This is a real confident group right now who feels like they can beat anybody in the NAIA on a given night," he added. "And that mentality really showed up tonight. They are hungry, they are focused and they are determined. Now we just have to weather this Holiday break, which can be a challenge. But all-in-all, this was an impressive win by our guys and I'm really excited about the way they played."

Northern is off until Dec. 29-30 when the Lights host the AmericInn Classic.

DSU — John Hanstad 2-6 0-1 5, Matthew Lee 4-7 2-4 10, Jarek Hansen 0-3 4-4 4, Tevin Hurd 1-5 0-2 2, Ryan Kittleson 0-0 0-1 0, Robbie Morey 1-2 2-3 4, Isiah Thomas 2-4 2-4 6, Destry Sterkel 0-1 0-0 0, Connor Cunningham 2-3 0-0 4, Casper Hesseldal 3-8 2-2 8, Jeff Hurd 0-1 2-4 2, Daniel Casey 0-0 0-0 0, Donavyn Persley 1-2 1-1 3,. Totals 16-44 15-26 48.

MSU-N — David Maddock 2-6 0-0 5, Devin Jackson 6-10 2-2 19, Jordan Harris 0-0 0-0 0, Shaun Tatarka 6-13 3-4 21, LaVon Myers 2-9 0-0 6, Sean Kelly 3-3 4-4 10, Mike LaValley 1-3 0-0 3, Chris Brown 1-2 0-0 2, Joe Simpson 1-2 4-4 6, Ben Mitchell 1-2 0-0 2, Pat Jensen 0-1 0-0 0, Baird Henning 0-2 0-1 0, Corbin Pearson 1-2 2-2 4. Totals 24-55 15-17 78.

Halftime: Northern 40-20. 3-pt FG: DSU 1-9 (Hanstad 1-2, Lee 0-1, Hansen 0-3, Hurd 0-1, Hesseldal 0-1, Hurd 0-1), MSU-N 15-40 (Maddock 1-5, Jackson 5-9, Tatarka 6-12, Myers 2-8, LaValley 1-3, Mitchell 0-1, Henning 0-2). Rebounds: DSU 32 (Thomas 5, Hesseldal 5), MSU-N 34 (Tatarka 4, Kelly 4, Pearson 4). Fouls DSU 19, MSU-N 20. Fouled out: Myers .