

George Ferguson Column: A special coach reaches a special milestone

From the Fringe...

George Ferguson

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Saturday night's MSU-Northern men's win over the nationally-ranked UM-Western Bulldogs was a big one. It was big for the Lights and for their season which has yet to completely unfold.

But not lost on the moment, it was also a milestone for Northern head coach Shawn Huse. Fittingly, against one of the Lights' biggest and best adversaries, Huse earned career win No. 200 at Northern, and his team earned it in thrilling fashion.

And make no mistake, getting to 200 wins is no small feat. Huse came to Northern just as the Frontier was going through some big changes, including the addition of traditional basketball powers Westminster College and Lewis-Clark State.

Huse also came to Northern at a time when recruiting basketball players to Frontier schools has become a much different game than it once was. There was a time when the top high school players in Montana flocked to Frontier schools and NAIA teams were predominately made up of four and five-year high school players.

But that's just not the case anymore, actually anywhere in college basketball. And as a result, recruiting has become a whole different animal than it once was. There's also hard economic times which have altered budgets, intense travel expenses and a host of other challenges college coaches face today, all of which makes what Huse has done at Northern nothing short of remarkable.

In his nine-plus seasons at Northern, Huse has won Frontier championships, he's taken teams to the NAIA national basketball tournament and he's saw many of his players earn all-conference and all-american honors individually. Two of his former players, Larry and Lamar Morinia have both gone on to careers playing professional and semi-professional basketball around the globe, while so many others have gone on to successes outside the game of basketball.

That's one of the things about Huse that impresses me most. He continues to win at Northern, he continues to make his program reach new levels, which is what everyone wants above all else, yet his players, his teams are also good people, good students, good in the community and a great many of them have become role models and heroes for children in Havre.

I know Shawn well enough to know, he'd say it's those last few sentences I wrote that matter most to him. Those are the things he cherishes most as a basketball coach and those are things he will never relent on. He will always want his basketball teams to be made up of those types of players, win or lose.

That's what a college coach should be about above else, and we have that type of coach at MSU-Northern. Honestly, with the success Huse has had on and off the court, we're lucky he's still here because there's no doubt he's a good enough coach to continue to climb the coaching ladder in college hoops.

"I just have to thank all the players who I've coached, all the great coaches I've worked with and for over the year and all the great fans in this community that support our program,

Huse said. "And of course, my family for their great support of me over my career."

In his 200 wins and even his 107 losses since he came to Northern, Huse has been a major benefit to our community, to our school and to the countless numbers of young men who've had the privilege of being led by him.

Congratulations coach Huse, there's no doubt in my mind, there's many more victories to come.