

Breaking Sports: Lights storm back to beat Westminster

No. 13 Northern 53, Westminster 50

George Ferguson

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The Montana State University-Northern men's basketball team controlled Friday night's home game with LC State from tip to finish. On Saturday night, the always-tough Westminster Griffins wouldn't let the Lights have that same control. But, the No. 13 Lights erased a seven-point second half deficit and hung on to beat the Griffins 53-50 in front of a raucous crowd at the MSU-Northern Fieldhouse.

The Lights led 31-30 at halftime after both teams traded shots throughout the first 20 minutes. But the Griffins stormed out of the gates, going on a 9-2 run to start the second, and it looked as though the Lights, who were again stymied at the 3-point line were in a bit of trouble. But two straight baskets by Big Sandy freshman Corbin Pearson and a much-needed triple by Shaun Tatarka brought the Lights roaring back to tie the game at 46-46 with 7:41 to go.

Northern then started to finally get some stops on defense and an old-fashioned 3-point play by senior Sean Kelly gave MSU-N a 49-46 lead with 4:30 left. The Griffins trailed by 51-46 after Northern finished a 10-0 run, but they didn't go away and cut the lead to 51-50 with :04 left. Tatarka calmly sank two free throws to put the Lights back up by three and Northern survived a good look at a triple by Jordan Hayter, which would have tied the game.

Tatarka led another low-scoring night for the Lights, with 12 points. Joe Simpson added 11 points and seven rebounds, while LaVon Myers scored eight. The Lights went just 4-of-11 from three and in a weekend sweep, they only made five triples total. The Griffins (3-4, 15-8) were led by Jake Orchard's 12 points.

Northern improved to 6-1 in the Frontier and is still tied with UM-Western atop the league standings. The win over the Griffins got the Lights (20-3) to the 20-win plateau for the seventh time in Shawn Huse's career at Northern. MSU_N starts a crucial three-game road stretch next Saturday at rival UGF.