Breaking Sports: Lights overpower Argos; Host UM-Western on Monday night

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The University of Great Falls Argos have had a great season. That season included a stunning last-second win over the MSU-Northern Lights last month in Great Falls. On Friday night however, Northern showed no mercy in a statement win over the Argos inside a near-capacity MSU-Northern Fieldhouse. In the Frontier Conference semifinals Friday night, the Lights completely dominated the Argos in the final 20 minutes in what turned into an 81-56 victory. The win pushed MSU-N (27-6) into its second straight Frontier Conference championship game, which will take place Monday night in Havre.

MSU-Northern’s Devin Jackson (ball) goes into the lane during Friday night’s Frontier Conference semifinal between the Lights and UGF at the MSU-Northern Fieldhouse.

During the regular season, the Lights and Argos split, with each team winning by one point on its own home floor. And for one half, it looked like another down-to-the-wire game between the two rivals was in order. The Argos came out playing tenacious defense, but the Lights countered with great defense of their own. Neither team led by more than five points, but the lights managed a 9-4 run to end the half and lead 33-29.

The second half was a completely different story. Shaun Tatarka drilled the first of eight second-half 3-pointers by the Lights as MSU-N outscored UGF 15-3 in the first 5:23 of the final stanza. Northern then went on a back-breaking 18-0 run, which included triples by LaVon Myers, Devin Jackson and David Maddock, and by the time UGF scored again, the Lights were up 72-44 and had turned the game into a blowout.

MSU-N’s David Maddock (left) looks for a shot during Friday night’s Frontier semifinal game against UGF in Havre.

MSU-N did its damage on offense from all over the floor. The Lights shot 53 percent from the field and went 11-of-18 from the 3-point line. Tatarka finished with 20 points and five triples while Maddock scored 11 and hit three treys. Joe Simpson was on a mission in the paint too. He scored a game-high 22 points and grabbed five rebounds as the Lights won their sixth straight game. UGF (20-12) got 15 points from Leon Sutton, as he was the only Argo to reach double figures.

Friday night's victory moved Northern within one win of claiming the Frontier championship for a second straight season. The Lights will host UM-Western in Monday night's championship game. The Bulldogs beat Westminster 70-68 in the other semifinal Friday night in Dillon. Monday's championship game is set for 7 p.m. at the MSU-Northern Fieldhouse.

The MSU-Northern student section erupts during Friday night’s Frontier Conference semifinal between the Lights and Argos in Havre.