Daniel Horton Trip Report #1: Long day, but the Lights are there

Daniel Horton
Tuesday, March 13th, 2012

KANSAS CITY — Simply saying that Monday was a long day for the Montana State University-Northern Lights basketball team would be a huge understatement. Day 1 of their journey to the 2012 NAIA Division 1 basketball tournament in Kansas City, MO was long, hectic, draining and certainly bumpy.

The Lights set out for Kansas City at 8:45 a.m. on Monday, as they had a long trip ahead of them. And though nothing, literally nothing, went according to the well planned itinerary, the coaches and players were ecstatic to finally touch down in Missouri at 10:45 p.m. central time. But the long days aren’t behind the Lights, as they have plenty more to do, both on and off the court before facing Columbia Wednesday night at 7:45 p.m. (local time).

“It was definitely a long day of travel with two separate flight delays,” Northern head coach Shawn Huse said. “But we are here now and we are excited. The guys are focused, they want to make some noise this year and hopefully things will work out in our favor. Tomorrow (Tuesday) is another long day for us with practice, community service and the banquet tomorrow night.”

Lights in Kansas City - Day 1

8:45 a.m. — The team left Havre/MSU-N campus heading for Billings airport.

1 p.m. — Lunch at Fudruckers in Billings.

2 p.m. — Began lining up at Billings airport before finding out their flight set to depart at 3:12 p.m. was delayed.

5 p.m — Finally found a way to get onto a flight out of Billings, setting their sights on a connection in Denver, CO.

9 p.m. — Boarded a flight for Kansas City after yet another delay in Denver.

10:45 p.m. (central) — Landed at the Kansas City International airport after two long delays.

11:15 p.m. (central) — Rented the necessary vehicles to transfer the team and staff from the airport to the Westin Crown Center Hotel 35 minutes away.

12:00 a.m. (central) — Team arrived at the Westin Crown Center and finally got their room assignment, great news, as they finally knew they were going to get to sleep with an 8 a.m. Tuesday practice time lingering in front of them.

There are always things that can go wrong with travel, especially with a group of Northern’s size trying to make it across the country in a timely manner. But just as coach Huse said, his team is focused.
I was able to greet the team at the airport late Monday night, and though I saw a lot of exhausted bodies, I also saw a lot of excited faces. It took just a few minutes to retrieve the luggage, but there was already talk of everything today will bring for the Lights, as well as chatter concerning what the Lights have to do to make this a better year than last. It all starts with Columbia Wednesday night, and the Lights are focused.