With all due respect to the fine folks of Kansas City, it’s time to move the NAIA national men’s basketball tournament.

I’m sorry, but the historic, rustic and fine venue that is the Municipal Auditorium in K.C. has not been good to my Montana State University-Northern Lights.

MSU-N has been to K.C. three times in the last four years, yet the Lights have not been able to get out of the first round in each trip. Now I’ll give credit where credit it due, all three of Northern’s opponents in the last three trips to the national tourney, Robert Morris in 2009, Biola in 2011 and Columbia last night were all darn good teams. But so are the Lights and that’s why I’m thinking a change of venue is in order.

On Wednesday night, the Lights came out ice old against Columbia, but it didn’t really hurt them as Columbia was just as cold and it was Northern who started to warm up first.

And my emotions went with the ebbs and flows because in the beginning, I was thinking the arena in K.C. just isn’t the place for a Lights’ team who came in shooting better than 50 percent from the field for seven straight games. Then Shaun Tatarka and LaVon Myers, and even Ben Mitchell knocked down some three’s and the Lights led by six points at halftime.

I was feeling better.

I was feeling even better when Tatarka splashed another three and was fouled for a four-point play to start the second half.

But the Municipal Auditorium curse raised its ugly head once again as the Lights went nearly six minutes without a point and that was just enough of a drought to see Columbia, which didn’t shoot particularly well either, come back and steal the game from the Lights.

And just like that, Northern’s magical season was over. In a somewhat dark and very old, though very historic gym in Kansas City. Just like that, this magical two-year ride this great Northern team has taken us all on has come to an end.

That’s the sad reality of it all, and the heartbreak has now come three times in a row in K.C.

When Northern lost to Robert Morris in what was the Lights’ first trip to the national tourney in over a decade, it came in overtime in what was a thrilling game. Last year, the Lights just never got it going against Biola, though they kept it close. Last night, the Lights looked to be in control, but a short shooting slump and the play of Columbia’s Jordan Dressler did them in.

I just can’t help but think the next time the Lights go back, and with a great coach like Shawn Huse at the helm, there will be next time, I’m hoping the tournament is in a new venue. It might be sour grapes and it might be me just being superstitious, but we’ve tried Kansas City, more than once. Three great Lights’ teams, all who could shoot the ball very well, went into Municipal Auditorium and didn’t have their best nights.
That tells me, at least in that gym, it just wasn’t meant to be.

I know Kansas is one of the basketball holy lands. I know Dr. James Naismith was born there. I know about Rock Chalk Jayhawk and Wilt Chamberlain and all of that.

But the ghosts of Kansas basketball past aren’t helping my Lights out any down there, so maybe, just maybe, a change of scenery is just what is needed.