Lights were a few plays away from a win
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KANSAS CITY — There was just one block in the entire game, but that one block, it proved to be fatal for the Montana State University-Lights’ 2012 NAIA DI Mens’ Basketball national title dreams.

Wednesday night the Lights took on the Columbia Cougars at the Municipal Arena in Kansas City, MO. It was a tight contest, mostly a defensive battle where the lead changed just twice, but was tied up several times. The Cougars defeated the Lights 58-52 after the Lights built a 28-22 halftime lead.

Turnovers played a major role in the contest, but there was one key sequence that truly kept the Lights from battling back in the end and possibly earning the win.

MSU-N finished the night with 13 turnovers, while the Cougars turned the ball over just six times. And while 13 was more than the Lights wanted, as some of them came in key situations, they could have easily done worse. The Cougars pressed the Lights for a good portion of the game, especially near the half court line as the Lights dribbled the ball up the floor.

But it wasn’t the 13 turnovers that put a stop to a comeback run by the Lights, it was Columbia’s Jordan Dressler, a towering 6-8 forward who racked up 45 blocks on the season. Dressler had the lone block in the contest, and it was very timely in the win over Northern.

Columbia led the Lights 54-52 with one minute left to play in the game. The Cougars’ lead came after overtaking the Lights 39-37 for their first lead of the game just minutes earlier. But after an offensive slump by the Lights, Northern found themselves right back in contention late in the game with key points in the paint by LaVon Myers and Joe Simpson. Around the 7:00 mark, Myers scored four quick points on drives to the hole to keep the Lights within one, 46-45. Around the two-minute mark, Simpson did the same thing, scoring back-to-back layups to keep the Lights within three, 52-49.

But trailing 54-52 with 27 second left in the game, Dressler made his defensive presence felt. On another great cut to the basket, Simpson was on his way to re give the Lights the lead, but Dressler stayed on Simpson’s hip and blocked the shot off the glass, resulting in a Cougars’ possession and no Northern points or lead. After giving up four consecutive layups, Dressler’s one block put a screeching halt to the Lights momentum. From there, the Cougars hit their foul shots and fended off the surging Lights, 58-52.

If it hadn’t been for the Cougars’ big man, the Lights could have very well earned a win on Wednesday night. After a 3-point slump late in the second half, MSU-N heavily relied on driving to the hole. They found great success doing so, but one Dressler block changed things immensely.

MSU-N finished the season with an overall record of 27-7.