Young Lights head north for three more games
George Ferguson
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The Montana State University-Northern men’s basketball team found its season-opening trip north of the border to its liking as the Lights went 2-0 in Edmonton, Alberta.

However, Northern second trip into Canada may prove to be a bit more daunting. Starting Friday, Northern will be in British Columbia for a trio of games against CIS teams, which is the highest level of college basketball in Canada.

“These three are going to be pretty tough,” Northern head coach Shawn Huse said. “All three of those teams play at the highest level in Canada. All three of those teams have some outstanding talent, and they all are big, physical teams. So we’re going to have our hands full on this trip.”

The Lights open the three game trip Friday night in Kamloops, B.C. against the University of Fraser Valley Cascades. UFV is 1-0 on the young season, but earlier in the fall, they hosted exhibition games against NCAA D1 teams in Eastern Washington and Cal State Northridge. The Cascades made it to the Bronze Medal Game of the CIS Final 8 last season, which means they finished fourth in all of CIS basketball a year ago.

On Saturday, the Lights will take on Thompson Rivers University, also in Kamloops. The Wolf Pack are another member of the CIS Canada West Conference, and they open their season on Friday night. The Wolf Pack are picked to finish second in the Canada West this season, behind SVU, so Northern, in its first two games this weekend, will be playing essentially the top two teams in that conference.

MSU-N wraps up its trip on Sunday afternoon against UBC-Okanagan in Kelowna, B.C. The Heat are making the transition to CIS and Canada West and they went 7-24 a year ago. The Heat have played several exhibition games this season, but Northern is their season-opener on Sunday.

Meanwhile, the Lights are already into their 2012-13 season, having thumped both Concordia of Alberta and King’s College last week in Edmonton. MSU-N combined to make 24 3-pointers in its two wins and 12 different Lights scored over the course of two games. Northern’s defense was stingy as well, holding its two opponents to under 30 percent from the field.

But Huse said this weekend will certainly be a step up in competition, and it will be daunting for his young team as the Lights are still coming together.

“We’ve got a long way to go,” Huse said. “We’re young and we’re new. So this weekend’s trip will be a big challenge for our team because we’re facing three top-level Canadian teams. So we’ll see how it goes.”

Friday, the Lights face UFV at 6 p.m. Saturday, MSU-N takes on Thompson Rivers at 4 p.m. and Sunday, Northern battles UBC-Okanagan at 3 p.m.

The Lights return home next Friday to host another Canada West foe. MSU-N opens its home schedule on Oct. 26 against the Lethbridge Pronghorns at 7 at the Armory Gymnasium.