Knights lance the Lights
Talented Warner-Pacific stuns MSU-Northern men at home
George Ferguson
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The Warner Pacific Knights have been on a very similar path as the Montana State University-Northern men’s basketball team has the last few years.

Like the Lights, the Knights are a perennial conference title and national tournament contender and they have enjoyed great success recently. And occasionally, the Lights and Knights’ paths have crossed over the last couple years, and they did again on Saturday night.

The Knights, ranked No. 15 in NAIA Division II rode into the Armory Gymnasium on Saturday and rolled out with a 73-55 win over the host Lights. The loss was MSU-N’s first of the season, and it was the Lights first home loss in almost two years.

“Warner-Pacific played great tonight,” MSU-N head coach Shawn Huse said. “I feel like they are a very good team that will have a lot of success in their league this season, and their league is very tough. So give them a lot of credit for coming in here and playing so well.”

A myriad of things led to the Lights faltering at home, but shooting was a huge factor – both ways.

The Lights shot a dismal 34 percent for the game and just 19 percent from the 3-point-line, while the Knights buried 9-of-13 three’s and shot 60 percent from the field. Warner also out-rebounded Northern 40-31 and turned the Lights over 15 times.

But all of that aside, MSU-N was able to shake off a slow start and take a three-point lead into the half. The Knights led 13-6 early on, but MSU-N ran off 14 unanswered points and a 16-3 run overall to end the half leading 28-25. The run was sparked by three’s from Alfie Miller and tough interior play from Nilson Santana and Will Perry.

However, the lead was short-lived as the Knights opened the second half on a 9-2 run, and Northern went stone cold from the field. “We got off to a slow start in both halves and that didn’t help,” Huse said. “And it just seemed like we weren’t answering them all night. And then they went on a stretch in the second half where they couldn’t miss and our defense wasn’t good enough to withstand that run.”

Devin Jackson knocked in a couple of three’s to keep the Lights within six points midway through the second stanza, but Warner-Pacific was just heating up. Ryan Parks and Doug Thomas combined to hit four triples in a five-minute stretch as the Knights ripped off a 14-4 run, which eventually upped their lead to as many as 23 points at 67-44. And by that point, there was only four minutes left in enough time to mount any sort of surge.
“When you have cold shooting nights like we did tonight, you hope your defense can pick up the slack and keep you in the game,” Huse said. “But that wasn’t the case tonight. We didn’t defend and we didn’t rebound well enough to overcome a tough night shooting.”

The Lights made just 6-of-31 three’s, and coming into Saturday’s contest, Northern was averaging 11 made three’s per game. Jackson finished with a team-high 13 points, while Santana had 12 points and a game-high 13 rebounds. Miller chipped in with 11, including three trey’s, while Savion Udeh added nine points. The Knights (1-1), who lost to Great Falls on Friday night, got 18 points and 12 rebounds from Stephen Harris.

The loss dropped Northern to 6-1 on the season, and the Lights have a tough weekend ahead, having to travel to Las Vegas to take on two Golden State Athletic Conference powers, including No. 1-ranked Concordia this coming weekend.

But Huse said his young team will learn from Saturday’s loss and move forward.

“We’re disappointed,” Huse said. “But this is a new team, and it’s a good learning lesson for them. Tonight shows us what we have to work on and what we need to get better at, and we’ll do that going forward.”

Northern heads to Las Vegas for games against Westmont on Friday and Concordia of California on Saturday. MSU-N plays at home against Jamestown College Nov. 23-24.

A new experience

**Warner-Pacific 73, Lights 55**

**W-P** — Zac Compton 4-5 0-3 8, Marcus Moore 0-0 0-0 0, Coletun Tarr 3-3 2-3 9, Josh Black 2-3 0-1 5, Garrett Strasburg 3-5 1-2 7, Stephen Harris 6-14 5-5 18, Jeremy Jones 3-4 0-0 6, Doug Thomas 4-7 0-0 11, Bill Edwardson 0-0 0-0 0, Diego Herrejon 0-0 0-0 0, Ryan Parks 3-6 0-0 9. Totals 28-47 8-14 73/

**MSU-N** — Roshawn West 1-2 0-0 2, Devin Jackson 4-11 3-4 13, Will Perry 2-6 0-0 4, Corbin Pearson 1-3 0-0 2, Mike LaValley 0-1 0-0 0, Pat Jensen 0-0 0-0 0, Dontae Clark 0-1 0-2 0, Alfie Miller 4-11 0-0 11, Jesse Vaughan 1-3 0-0 2, Nilson Santana 6-15 0-0 12, Alan Brown 0-3 0-0 0, Anfernee Standing Rock 0-0 0-0 0, Savion Udeh 4-11 0-0 9. Totals 23-67 3-6 55.