The Montana State University-Northern men's basketball team knew this weekend’s trip to Las Vegas was going to be a huge challenge.

After all, the No. 23 Lights, with four new starters, and a nearly brand new team, were coming off a difficult home loss to Warner-Pacific, and were going up against two of the top-ranked teams in the NAIA in GSAC powers Concordia College and Westmont College.

And one power got the Lights, as MSU-N fell to No. 8 Westmont 70-56 on Friday. But MSU-N showed resolve by bouncing back to beat defending national champion Concordia 70-58 Saturday night.

Against Concordia, the Lights jumped out to a 37-26 halftime lead by shooting nearly 60 percent from the floor in the first 20 minutes. MSU-N also played great defense, limiting the Eagles to just four 3-pointers and 33 percent shooting for the night. The Lights also turned Concordia over 15 times and were even on the boards, as the Lights tied the much-taller Eagles 34-34 in rebounds.

Northern made just five three’s itself Saturday, but the Lights were efficient, shooting 55 percent from the field for the night. Devin Jackson led the way with 17 points, while Jesse Vaughan added 12 points and seven boards. Alfie Miller made two triples and scored 10 points, while Roshawn West and Nilson Santana scored eight and seven points, respectively.

That was a huge night for our new team," MSU-N head coach Shawn Huse said. "Everyone played extremely poised against the pressure defense Concordia plays. I am extremely proud of these guys and their effort and it should give us confidence that we need moving forward."

Northern’s weekend started off with a tough loss to Westmont. MSU-N dug itself a huge hole in the first half, trailing 37-11 at halftime. The Lights played much better in the second half, outscoring Westmont 45-33, but the first-half deficit was too much to overcome.

"We fought extremely hard in the second half,” Huse said. “I was very proud of our guys for their effort to come back after a tough start against a great team. This was a great tournament from a competition standpoint, and will only make us better for the rest of non-conference and league play.”

In the loss Friday, Miller nailed five of the Lights’ 11 three’s on his way to 18 points. Vaughan added 13 points and Jackson chipped in with 12.

The Lights (7-2) will have a week off before hosting the Jamestown Jimmies Nov. 23-24 at the Armory Gymnasium.

Westmont 70, Lights 56

MSU-N – Roshawn West 0, Devin Jackson 12, Corbin Pearson 0, Savion Udeh 0, Jesse Vaughan 13, Dontae Clark 0, Allan Brown 0, Mike LaValley 6, Nilson Santana 7, Will Perry 0, Pat Jensen 0, Alfie Miller 18, Anfernee Stadning Rock 0. Totals 17-49 11-18 56.


Lights 70, Concordia 58

CC – Peter Smith 6, Nolan Abernathy 8, Brandon Hucks 8, Tim Harris 9, Dakota Downs 12, DeLaun Frazier 6, Jywrell Wilson 2, Alex Rudd 6, Lucas Simpson 1. Totals: 20-58 14-17 58.

MSU-N – Roshawn West 8, Devin Jackson 17, Allan Brown 3, Will Perry 5, Jesse Vaughan 12, Corbin Pearson 0, Dontae Clark 0, Savion Udeh 3, Mike LaValley 5, Nilson Santana 7, Alfie Miller 10. Totals: 27-49 11-18 70.