The Montana State University-Northern men’s basketball team played pretty much non-stop from the beginning of October to the beginning of December. But the Lights have had the last 19 days without playing a game.

Tonight in Portland, Ore., that all changes as the No. 22 Lights (11-2) take on Portland Bible College as part of a two-day road trip in Oregon. Northern also faces Linfield College on Friday night in McMinville, Ore.

The Lights last took the court Dec. 1 when they trounced New Hope Christian. The night before, MSU-N opened Frontier Conference play with an emotional and dominating win over Carroll College in Havre. But that was nearly a month ago, and with the return to conference play looming, the Lights are looking forward to getting back on the court this weekend.

“I think the guys are excited to get back at it now that the semester of homework and tests and projects and presentations are complete,” Northern head coach Shawn Huse said. “The final two weeks of the semester are always very taxing, so it was nice to be able to focus mostly on finishing strong. Now it’s on to two more very challenging games that will serve as more experience for this young team to learn and build from.”

While the break did Northern some good, the Lights were really hitting their stride before it. Northern comes into tonight’s game against Portland Bible, averaging 77 points per game and shooting around 37 percent from the 3-point-line. But defense is really where Northern continues to make hay. The Lights allow just 60 points per contest, and team’s are only shooting around 40 percent from the field against them.

Individually, MSU-N has been balanced this season. Senior Devin Jackson and junior Jesse Vaughan average 14 and 13 points, respectively, while Alfie Miller comes off the bench to score 12 per game. Roshawn West and Will Perry both average around six points per game, while Corbin Pearson, Mike LaValley and Savion Udeh give MSU-N around five per night.

As for this weekend’s games, MSU-N certainly would like a road sweep, but the Lights are also focused on getting back into the groove after such a long layoff, and with another two-week layoff coming before league games start up again in January.

Tonight’s opponent, Portland Bible College is a solid 14-4 on the season. The Wildcats play in the NCCAA and have won several regional titles in past years. Linfield, which the Lights will battle Friday night, is an NCAA DII school which plays in the Northwest Conference. The Wildcats are 3-6 on the season, but have played a tough schedule thus far and should give the Lights a good battle on their home floor.

Tonight’s game between the Lights and Portland Bible College will tip off at 7:30 in Portland, Ore. Friday night’s game against Linfield will begin at 6 p.m. in McMinville, Ore. Northern will return home to start Frontier play Jan. 3 against Dickinson State and Jan. 4 against Rocky Mountain College.