No. 9 Evangel Holds Off Montana State-Northern, 64-54
March 13, 2013

Crusaders Score the Final Seven Points to Hold Off Late Lights Push

Kansas City, Mo. - No. 9 Evangel advanced to the second round of the 2013 Buffalo Funds-NAIA Division I Men's Basketball National Championship after claiming a 64-54 win over Montana State-Northern. The Crusaders will advance to the second round and play LSU Shreveport (La.) on Friday, March 15 at 4:30 p.m. CDT. The event is held at Municipal Auditorium.

Zack Kleine poured in 18 points on 7-of-12 shooting to lead the way for Evangel, while Victor Agbasi chipped in 16 points, including a three-pointer with 1:06 remaining to beat the shot clock and gave the Crusaders an eight-point advantage. J.J. Williams finished with 11 points, four rebounds, four assists and three steals for Evangel.

After yielding the first bucket of the game, Evangel scored 12-straight points for an early double-digit advantage. Kleine and Williams were in on the early offense with first six points before Jayme Donnelly and Agbasi connected on back-to-back three-pointers. Evangel (26-6) enjoyed an 11-point lead as late as the 9:58 mark after a transition bucket by Agbasi, but Montana State-Northern limited the Crusaders to one field goal over 8:16 and trimmed the deficit to 57-54.

Williams broke the drought with a drive to the basket with 1:42 to play before Agbasi beat the shot clock with the last field goal of the game as the Crusaders held the Lights scoreless for the final 3:15.

"This tournament is all about surviving and advancing, and that's what we did tonight - survive," said Evangel head coach Steve Jenkins. "They changed defenses on us several times in the second half and that slowed us down some, but we missed open shots and missed a lot of lay-ups. It came down to us needing a stop and a rebound. We were able to get that and Vic (Agbasi) hit a three."

The three-point shot was key on both ends for the Crusaders as they converted 9-of-17 (.529) from beyond the arc while limiting the Lights to just 6-of-25 (.240) three-pointers. The Crusaders also held a 9-6 edge at the charity stripe.

"It's about getting stops and making shots," said Montana State-Northern head coach Shawn Huse. "I think we did a pretty good job of getting the stops we needed, especially in the second half. Our guys responded after that first half. (Evangel's) a good team over in that locker room. Give them credit. They played pretty good defense, but they're still shots that we can make."

Corbin Pearson was the only player in double figures for Montana State-Northern, finishing with 17 points to go along with eight rebounds. Will Perry and Devin Jackson each added eight points while Jesse Vaughan collected seven rebounds.

Montana State-Northern ends its season at 23-10.
**Game Notes:**
Evangel - The Crusaders are making their fourth appearance in the Division I Men's Basketball National Championship and improved to 3-3 all-time ... Evangel won its opening round game for the third-straight season, but will be looking for its first-ever second round victory on Friday afternoon ... The Crusaders' Zack Kleine is now averaging 14.0 points in three career games at the national tournament.

Montana State-Northern - The Lights returned to the national tournament for the third-straight year and the seventh time overall ... Montana State-Northern fell to 3-7 all-time at the national tournament and was knocked out in the opening round for the third-straight year ... The Lights' Corbin Pearson set a career-high with 17 points, entering the game with a 6.7 per game scoring average, but scoring in double figures in eight of the final 10 games on the campaign.