Lights release exciting hoops schedule
By George Ferguson
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The Montana State University-Northern men’s basketball team has gone to three straight NAIA national tournaments. The Lights are also in the midst of one of the most winningest runs the program has seen in some time. Northern has recorded eight straight 20-win seasons under veteran head coach Shawn Huse.

And though summer is here to stay for a while, and the Lights won’t get things cranked up until October, the march for more Frontier Conference supremacy is already under way.

Huse recently announced his 2013-14 schedule, a schedule that includes some exciting home games, as well as yet another Frontier Conference-opener against Carroll College.

Northern will open the season with three straight home games, starting Oct. 13 against Concordia University of Alberta. The next weekend, the Lights host the University of Regina for two games.

But it’s when Northern gets into the month of November is when things get really exciting, and even more challenging. MSU-N has secured a home-and-home series with Montana State-Billings. The Yellowjackets, and NCAA Division II power, will visit the Armory Gymnasium on Nov. 5, and the Lights will make a return trip to Billings on Nov. 22. The Yellowjackets haven’t played in Havre since they were formerly a member of the Frontier, and were then known as Eastern Montana College, and that’s been quite some time ago.

“It’s pretty exciting to have MSU-B on the schedule,” Huse said. “They are a really good team, they’ve really become a strong program. Playing them, twice is going to be a heck of a challenge. And I don’t think they’ve played in a Frontier Conference gym, other than Rocky (Mountain College), in at least 15 years or so. So it’s going to be really exciting to play them in our gym.”

The game in Havre will be an exhibition game for the Yellowjackets, but will count for the Lights. Northern’s trip to Billings will count for MSU-N but is a planned non-counter for Northern. The Nov. 5 game in Havre will also be a huge day for Northern fans, as the Lights also host Montana Tech in football that afternoon at Blue Pony Stadium.

And two games against MSU-B aren’t the only reasons November will be a big month for the Lights. They will also trek to Phoenix, Ariz., Nov. 15-16 for the Arizona Christian Tournament, and make a road trip to NAIA DII powerhouse Jamestown College Nov. 24. Finally, MSU-N wraps up the busy month with its Frontier Conference-opener against arch rival Carroll College Nov. 30 at the Armory Gymnasium. This will
be the second straight season under the new Frontier schedule, which has each team playing at least one conference game before January. It also marks the second time in as many years that the Lights and Saints will do battle in Havre to close out the month of November.

In all, the Lights will play six non-conference home games this season. In December, Northern hosts the University of Lethbridge early, and the Lights close out the year with a home game against Northwest Indian College, Dec. 29. NWIC is new to playing Frontier and NAIA schools, but in the last two years, the program has played many NCAA DI programs, including Montana State in Bozeman. NWIC will play the Bobcats again this year, the night before they play the Lights.

“I’m really excited about our schedule,” Huse said. “It’s another solid schedule. It’s a mix of games. We’re playing some really solid competition. Obviously, MSU-N is going to be a tremendous challenge. And we’re going down to play Arizona Christian on their home floor. They have really built something special down there in only two years as a program, and they already went to the national tournament just last year. Jamestown is going to be really tough, as we saw last year, and I think Northwest Indian College will bring a very competitive team in here. So it’s a schedule which should really prepare us well for the conference season.”

The conference season re-starts just after New Year’s for the Lights. They’ll open up with games at Dickinson State and Rocky Mountain College. MSU-N is home three times in January, with huge rivalry games against UM-Western Jan. 9 and Westminster College Jan. 11. MSU-N then rekindles its budding rivalry with the University of Great Falls Jan. 24 in Havre, before turning right around and playing in Great Falls Jan. 30.

The month of February has the Lights playing four at home, and twice against defending regular season Frontier champion Lewis-Clark State. Northern travels to Lewiston, Idaho Feb. 1 then welcomes in the Warriors Feb. 8, the night after hosting Montana Tech. MSU-N closes out its home schedule with Dickinson State on Feb. 20 and RMC Feb. 21. The Frontier playoffs are set for the following week.

“I really like the look of our schedule,” Huse said. “I think we have a really exciting home schedule and we are going to play some very good teams both home and away.”

**Lights 2013-14 Basketball Schedule**

Oct. 13 vs Concordia  
Oct. 18 vs University of Regina  
Oct. 19 vs University of Regina  
Oct. 25 vs Lethbridge At Lethbridge Tournament  
Oct. 26 vs Mount Royal At Lethbridge Tournament  
Nov. 2 vs MSU-Billings  
Nov. 15-16 at Arizona Christian Tournament At Phoenix, AZ  
Nov. 22 at MSU-Billings  
Nov. 24 at Jamestown  
Nov. 30 vs Carroll College  
Dec. 5 vs Lethbridge  
Dec. 6 at Augustana  
Dec. 7 at Augustana  
Dec. 29 vs Northwest Indian College  
Jan. 2 at Rocky Mountain  
Jan. 4 at Dickinson State  
Jan. 9 vs UM-Western  
Jan. 11 vs Westminster  
Jan. 17 at Montana Tech  
Jan. 18 at Carroll College  
Jan. 24 vs Great Falls  
Jan. 30 at Great Falls  
Feb. 1 at Lewis-Clark State  
Feb. 7 vs Montana Tech  
Feb. 8 vs Lewis Clark State
Feb. 13 at UM-Western
Feb. 15 at Westminster
Feb. 20 vs Dickinson State
Feb. 21 vs Rocky Mountain

See Friday’s Havre Daily News for a look at the MSU-Northern women’s basketball schedule.