Lights host Pronghorns in a rematch tonight
By George Ferguson
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Five days ago, the Montana State University-Northern men’s basketball team pulled off by far its biggest win of the young season. Beating Carroll College in a come-from-behind thriller at the Armory Gymnasium, the Lights are off to a 1-0 start in Frontier Conference play.

However, Northern must now shift gears, returning to the remainder of its nonconference slate, but also making sure the preparation continues when league play starts for good next month.

And tonight will be outstanding preparation for the No. 24 Lights (8-2) as they host the University of Lethbridge Pronghorns at 7 in the Armory.

And while tonight’s game isn’t a conference affair, like last Saturday’s battle with the Fighting Saints, it will certainly feel like one. Lethbridge (7-3) is a favorite in the CIS West this season, and the Horns took the Lights right down to the wire last month in Canada, before Northern prevailed 75-73.

“Our guys know how good of a team Lethbridge is after playing them earlier this year and seeing the damage they have done in our league (with wins at UM-Western and UGF),” MSU-N head coach Shawn Huse said. “We know we have to play well in the half court, in transition, and on the boards. They can put up points in a hurry, especially if we allow them running opportunities and second chance points.”

The Lights will also be without Will Perry tonight, a key contributor when MSU-N edged the Horns’ in Lethbridge. However, Northern is still playing well, and coming off an emotionally-charged home win last Saturday, the Lights will certainly be up for tonight’s challenge.

Alfie Miller leads Northern in scoring, averaging 13 points per game, and shooting better than 45 percent from the 3-point line. From there, the Lights are extremely balanced, with veterans Roshawn West, Jesse Vaughan and Corbin Pearson all averaging around nine points per outing. Nicholas Blount and Xavier Shaw are both giving the Lights quality minutes off the bench too.

Lethbridge has plenty of talent, too. And the Horns will challenge MSU-N’s defense, which yields just 53 points per game, especially 6-10 center Brent Watkins, who averages 15 points and 11 rebounds per game. Brandon Brine, a 6-6 swingman, and Morgan Duce, a speedy 5-11 point guard, are also big-time scoring threats for the Pronghorns.

Tonight’s game won’t be the only challenge the Lights face this weekend. Immediately following the contest with the Pronghorns, Northern will head north for a pair of nonconference games with the University of Alberta-Augustana in Camrose, Alberta. MSU-N battles the Vikings at 8 p.m. Friday night and 3 p.m.
Saturday. The games will be Northern’s final two tilts before the holiday break. The Lights won’t return to action until Dec. 27-28 when they host Northwest Indian College in Havre.

“We feel like all three of these games provide more good experience for us as we wrap up the semester and head into the holiday break,” Huse said.

Tonight’s game between MSU-N and Lethbridge will tip at 7 inside the Armory Gymnasium.