Salt Lake City has never been very friendly to the Montana State University-Northern basketball teams. And it wasn’t hospitable Saturday night, either.

Both the nationally ranked Lights and Skylights dropped road games at Westminster College Saturday night, wrapping up the final road trip of the regular season for Northern.

The No. 20 Lights took a six-game Frontier Conference winning streak into Saturday night’s battle with Westminster. And for a time, Northern looked like it was going to make it seven in a row. But the Griffins finished the game by out-scoring the Lights 17-11 to earn a 61-54 win. The victory made it a season sweep for the Griffins, who also beat MSU-N in Havre last month.

Saturday night’s loss dropped the Lights to 10-4 in the Frontier and back into second place. Rocky Mountain College is alone atop the league standings at 9-3 while the Griffins are tied with the Lights for second.

Northern was on the verge of avoiding falling into a tie with Westminster, which will own all tiebreakers over the Lights. MSU-N led by 11 points with 12:41 to play, as the Lights were able to build upon their slim, 27-24 halftime edge. But slowly the Griffins started to chip away, until they finally took the lead for good with just over three minutes remaining.

“We put ourselves in position to take this one tonight and did not get it done,” MSU-N head coach Shawn Huse said. “Give Westminster credit for battling back, but it was very disappointing as we felt we outplayed them for 30 minutes, and I believe we led the game for about that long. We started off a little sluggish but regrouped and took control till very late. We made just a few subtle mistakes on both ends late and that cost us.”

Northern was in control despite a second straight struggle against the Griffin defense. The Lights shot just 38 percent from the field and went a difficult 6-for-20 from the 3-point-line. The struggles from three came just one game after the Lights knocked off Western in Dillon. Corbin Pearson scored 13 points for the Lights, while Roshawn West added 11. Jesse Vaughan and Allan Brown each added, but the Griffins held leading scorer Alfie Miller to just five points, and he fouled out late in the contest. Westminster got 16 points from Tallon Robertson and a perfect 10-for-10 performance from the free-throw-line by Jordan Pryor.

Now, the Lights will look to chase down the Frontier regular season title from behind. MSU-N hosts Dickinson State Thursday night and closes the season with a huge showdown with first-place Rocky Friday night.

“As long as there are games left to play, we need to keep improving,” Huse said. “We have been on a good roll and the things that got us here were the things we forgot to do tonight. Regroup, correct mistakes, and prepare for next week is the only option.”

Westminster 62, Skylights 41

Meanwhile, the MSU-N women had an old nemesis creep up in Saturday night’s visit to third-ranked Westminster. For the third time in the last four games, the No. 19 Skylights got off to a horrific start, and it doomed them in a 62-41 loss in Salt Lake City.
The Griffins jumped out to a 32-14 halftime lead, as MSU-N shot a dismal 19 percent in the first half. The start offensively, against one of the best teams in the NAIA, turned out to be too much for Northern to overcome as the Skylights slumped to their third straight loss.

“We again had a terrible first half offensively,” MSU-N head coach Chris Mouat said. “We shot it poorly and dug ourselves a big hole.”

Northern tried hard to fight its way out of that hole in the second half. Kassie Barta came alive from the 3-point-line and A'Jha Edwards had a strong game inside. But the Griffins were just too good, shooting 50 percent from the floor, making eight 3-pointers and out-rebounding the Skylights 29-26.

Westminster was extremely balanced once again, as Shelby Ellsworth scored 16 points and Alli Blake added 12. Northern got a double-double from Edwards, who scored 14 points and grabbed 11 boards, while Barta added nine, all on three's.

Saturday night’s loss at Westminster dropped MSU-N to 8-6 in the Frontier and 18-8 overall, while the win clinched the Griffins’ sixth straight Frontier regular season title. MSU-N, which is now in a third-place tie with UM-Western, will look to bounce back on the final weekend of the regular season.

“I thought our physical effort was very good,” Mouat said. “We just can't afford poor shooting stretches against a team like them. We put some new things into play defensively that I was happy with. We just have to finish at the offensive end.”

The Skylights return home to face Dickinson State Thursday night and Rocky Mountain College Friday night at the Armory Gymnasium.

**Westminster 62, Skylights 41**

**MSU-N** – Natlaee Faupel 1-7 2-2 4, Rachelle Bennett 0-4 2-2 2, Taylor Cummings 1-2 3-4 5, Megan Feldman 0-2 0-0 0, A'Jha Edwards 7-16 0-0 14, Kassie Barta 3-5 0-0 9, Kacie McKeon 1-5 0-0 3, Taryn Norby 0-1 0-0 0, Molly Kreycik 0-0 0-0 0, Taybra Teeters 2-7 0-0 4. Totals: 15-49 7-8 41.

**WC** – Katie Walker 0-1 2-2 2, Shelby Ellsworth 5-7 3-3 16, Kelsi Wells 3-3 0-0 8, Alli Blake 4-7 4-4 12, Tia Pappas 2-5 3-4 8, Amy Krommenhoek 3-8 0-1 7, Katie Richens 0-3 0-0 0, Amanda Hacking 1-1 0-0 2, Alli Winters 1-4 0-0 3, Brooke Blonquist 1-1 0-0 2. Totals: 20-40 14-16 62.

Halftime: Westminster 32-14. 3-pointers: WC 8-15 (Ellsworth 3, Wells 2, Pappas 1, Krommenhoek 1, Winters 1), MSU-N 4-14 (Barta 3, McKeon 1); Rebounds: 29 (Four with four each), MSU-N 26 (Edwards 11); Fouls: WC 11, MSU-N 18; Fouled out: Feldman.

**Westminster 61, Lights 54**

**MSU-N** – Roshawn West 4-13 2-2 11, Allan Brown 2-7 3-3 8, Corbin Pearson 3-8 6-8 13, Alfie Miller 2-5 0-0 5, Jesse Vaughan 3-9 1-2 8, Nicholas Blount 1-1 0-0 3, Gabe Finley 0-0 2-4 2, Mike LaValley 0-0 0-0 0, Damian Robinson 1-1 0-0 2, Will Perry 1-1 0-0 2. Totals: 17-45 14-19 54.

**WC** – Quincy Bair 0-3 6-10 6, Tallon Robertson 4-13 8-9 16, Colton Moon 4-8 0-0 10, Blake Skidmore 4-10 0-1 9, Marcus Perry 0-0 0-0 0, Jordan Pryor 0-3 10-10 10, Adam Egan 1-2 2-2 4, Nick Jenson 3-5 0-0 6. Totals: 16-45 26-32 61.

Halftime: Northern 27-24. 3-pointers: WC 3-7 (Moon 2, Skidmore 1), MSU-N 6-20 (West 1, Brown 1, Pearson 1, Miller 1, Vaughan 1, Blount 1); Rebounds: WC 32 (Robertson 9), MSU-N 33 (Vaughan 8); Fouls: WC 17, MSU-N 22; Fouled out: Miller.