

Skylights back at work

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Friday, August 27th, 2010

The Montana State University-Northern volleyball team has already found out about itself early in the season.

On the opening weekend of the season, the Skylights were able to rebound from a tough loss and pull out a big win in their very next match.

That showed head coach Bill Huebsch his team has come along way in year.

"I think we've really progressed," Huebsch said. "I think we are a much smarter team, I think our volleyball IQ has gotten much higher and it showed by the way we played against Jamestown in Great Falls. I'm really excited about where we're at right now."

And the Skylights (1-1) will find out plenty more today and Saturday when they play in the Montana Tech Preseason Tournament in Butte. Northern faces back-to-back matches today, and also plays twice on Saturday. Today, MSU-N takes on South Dakota Tech at 1 and Eastern Oregon at 3. Saturday, the Skylights face Minot State at 9 a.m. and Dickinson State at 1 p.m.

Last week, Northern lost two of its scheduled four matches at the Holiday Inn Classic in Great Falls due to two teams backing out of the event. The Skylights fell to Concordia College in three games, but rallied to beat nationally-ranked Jamestown in four games.

Now, having gotten his team some experience, Huebsch is excited about getting four matches over the next two days.

"It will be really good for us," Huebsch said. "To play back-to-back matches the first day, we'll really test ourselves mentally and physically. Four matches in two days will be a good thing and our kids are looking forward to it."

Northern has looked strong so far behind its seniors Kaylee Bossert and Britney Baker. Junior setter Jordan Merrill is also right where the team needs her to be, so the Skylights are shaping up to be a the veteran team Huebsch was hoping for.

But they'll be tested all the way through the weekend. Huebsch said South Dakota Tech is as good a nonconference opponent as the Skylights will face, and EOU has some outstanding players as well.

"Those two teams we play on the first day, they are both really solid," Huebsch said. "And I saw both Dickinson and Minot in Great Falls, and they both looked to be really solid too."

"But I like the way we're playing right now and going up against four good teams will only make us better in the long run," he added. "We're not where we are trying to get to yet, but we're making good progress and we're really excited about this weekend."

The Skylights play four matches over the next two days in Butte. They'll also be on the road Sept. 3-4 at a tournament in Dickinson, N.D.