

Skylights swept at Carroll, RMC

George Ferguson

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Already going through a tough stretch in the season, things didn't get any easier for the Montana State University-Northern volleyball team in its final two matches of the Frontier Conference regular season.

The Skylights were swept by No. 23 Carroll College by scores of 25-22, 25-19 and 25-20 Friday night in Helena, and were then swept by No. 10 Rocky Mountain College by scores of 25-10, 25-8 and 25-11 Saturday in Billings.

The losses brought Northern's conference record to 5-9 for the season, and the Skylights are 13-13 overall.

At Carroll, Northern hung with the Saints through all three games, but it was hitting at critical times which was MSU-N's undoing.

"We played right with them," Northern head coach Bill Huebsch said. "Our passing and our serving was good, but we just got out-hit again. Carroll did play very well and I don't want to take anything away from them, but right now we're having a hard time putting the ball away when we have chances and that's holding us back. That was the difference in the match.

"There were some bright spots though," he added. "Samantha Hutcheson hit the ball well, Holly Cartwright had another good match defensively and Lynnsie Togiai passed the ball well."

Hillary Isleifson led the Skylights with 10 kills, 10 digs and 19 assists. Cartwright had 16 digs.

But if there were bright spots in Helena, there weren't many for Northern in Billings. The Bears dismantled the Skylights from start to finish on Rocky's senior day. Hutcheson had four kills in the loss and Cartwright added 13 digs.

"Rocky just came out and really took it to us," Huebsch said. "And we just didn't respond. It was pretty ugly."

With the two losses, Northern will be on a five-match losing streak heading into this weekend's Frontier Conference Tournament in Helena. The Skylights are the No. 6 seed and will face third-seeded Carroll in a rematch on Friday.

"It's been disappointing the last few matches," Huebsch said. "We address these things in practice, we work hard on them, but the those things aren't carrying over into matches.

"Now we just have to go back to work and get ready to play Carroll again," he continued. "We have to go down there and play at a much higher level than we did on Friday night."

Carroll def. MSU-Northern 25-22, 25-19, 25-20

MSU-N — Kills 38 (Hillary Isleifson 10), Assists 36 (Isleifson 19, Nahe Keanaaina 15), Aces 2, Digs 52 (Holly Cartwright 16), Blocks 2 (Sierra Diehl 1).

CC — Kills 35 (Kristin Telin 9), Assists 31 (Caitlin Tocci 20), Aces 6 (Tocci 2), Digs 49 (Maureen Fruanholtz 12), Blocks 10 (Markki Otteson 2).

Rocky def. MSU-Northern
25-10, 25-8, 25-11

MSU-N — Kills: 16 (Samantha Hutcheson 4). Assists: 16 (Nahe Keanaaina 11). Aces: 0. Digs: 36 (Holly Cartwright 13). Blocks: 3.

RMC — Kills: 36 (Jillian Bates 10, Ashley Welborn 8, Sara Brunner 6, Jillian Stanek 6). Assists: 32 (Kristin Barott 30). Aces: 5 (Barott 3). Digs: 56 (Welborn 15, Brunner 15). Blocks: 11 (Stanek 5).