

Skylights thrash rival Argos at home

(Created: Monday, January 18, 2010 12:22 PM MST)

George Ferguson Havre Daily News sports editor gferguson@havredailynews.com

After an 0-2 start to the Frontier Conference season, the Montana State University-Northern women's basketball team needed a win. Not only did the Skylights need a victory to erase last weekend's difficult road trip, but they needed to stay within striking distance in the early conference race. Northern accomplished those missions and then some on Saturday night by crushing the University of Great Falls Argos 63-36 at the MSU-Northern Fieldhouse. "I was very pleased with how we played for 30 minutes tonight," MSU-N head coach Chris Mouat said. "We had some lapses at the end of the game, and I wasn't happy with that. But this was a game we knew we had to have. A win keeps us in the pack in the standings, and in this league, you need to win at home. So I'm proud of the way we came out ready to go. We played well at the start of the game and we just kind of jumped on UGF and didn't let up too often." Indeed, the Skylights used an 11-0 run and a 15-2 finish of the first half to lead the Argos 32-15 at halftime. The run came after UGF actually led 6-5 after back-to-back 3-pointers by Marissa Francis and McKenzie Gentry. But the lead didn't last long, and a big reason for that was the spark the Skylights got from redshirt-freshman Jordan Bruursema, who came in and hit an early three, grabbed several rebounds and loose balls, and overall, ignited her short-handed team. The Skylights were without sophomore Laramie Schwenke, who was held out of the game for what Mouat said was a coaches decision. "Jordan really did a great job with her minutes all night, but especially in the first half," Mouat said. "She made plays for us and that's what we need our bench to do now. We've worked hard to establish some depth and now it's time for that to start paying off. The way she played, and Laci Keller and Katie Kuntz, I was really pleased with how our bench performed tonight." UGF, also short-handed on Saturday night, could never muster enough offense in the second half to make a serious run at the Skylights. MSU-N went on a 13-1 run to start the second half and led by as many 32 points at 50-18 en route to the blowout win over its arch rival. "Again, I didn't like the way we finished the game," Mouat said. "And as well as we played, we still have plenty to work on. But overall, I'm proud of the way we played, especially defensively. They (Argos) are a better team than they showed tonight. They have really good shooters and they've shown they can be explosive on offense this season. So I'm really proud of the way our kids defended them. We got off to a really good start on

both ends and we kept up the defensive intensity. And everyone who played really stepped up and contributed." The Skylights crushed the Argos on the boards. MSU-N's rebounding advantage was 51- 34 and Northern had both Zivile Gaizutyte and Casceal Swaggard finish with double-doubles. Gaizutyte totaled 15 points and 10 boards, while Swaggard added 10 points and a game-high 12 rebounds. Taylor Keller and Samm Schermele each scored nine points while Bruursema added seven. "The way 'Z' (Gaizutyte) and 'CC' (Swaggard) played tonight, I couldn't be more pleased," Moaut said. "Especially on the defensive end. They were special in the way they were rebounding the ball tonight." The Skylights improved to 1-2 in conference play and 10-9 overall with games against Montana Tech and UM-Western coming up this weekend in Havre. "This was big for us," Mouat said. "It keeps us in the race and our kids knew coming in we had to have this game. So I'm proud of them for being focused and being ready to go. We needed this one and we got it."