

## MSU-N women drop two in Great Falls; Lights split

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Last year, the Montana State University- Northern women's basketball team played a rigorous nonconference schedule, only to rise up and play at a high level during the Frontier Conference season. And to start the 2009-10 campaign, the Skylights are going through some of the same early-season growing pains they experienced a year ago. This past weekend, MSU-N was swept by a pair of highly-ranked NAIA teams at a tournament in Great Falls. On Friday night, Northern fell to second-ranked Vanguard University 83-67 at the McLaughlin Center in Great Falls, marking the second straight year Vanguard has come to Montana and taken care of the Skylights. "We played really hard against Vanguard. They are an outstanding team and really shoot the ball well," Skylight head coach Chris Mouat said. "I felt like we handled their pressure very well and were very ready to play. We got off to a great start shooting the ball from the field and really shared the ball well. They made a run just before half that hurt us and had a late run in the game that we never responded to. Defensively, I think we did some good things but their dribble penetration and ability to hit the three-point shot got to us in the end." In a fast-paced first half, the Skylights trailed the Lions by just nine points. But Vanguard's 3-point shooters, who combined to make 13 treys, were too much for MSU-N to overcome. The Lions had four players in double figures and Rachel Copeland and Diana Neves combined for 42 points and 12 three's. Laramie Schermele paced four Skylights in double figures with 15 points and three three's. Samm Schermele added 11 points and Kori Bingham came off the bench to hit three treys and score 11 points, while Awilda Hernandez added 10 points. On Saturday afternoon, Northern returned to the McLaughlin Center for a date with NAIA Division II power Southern Oregon. And while the Skylights played a stellar first half, and got a double-double from Zivile Gaizutyte, it was the second half which saw SOU overcome a nine-point deficit and beat the Skylights 76-72. "We basically self destructed," Mouat said. "We had 18 turnovers in the second half and most of them were turnovers that we simply shouldn't commit. Our game plan for stopping Speer was very solid. They got on a run in the second half from the 3-pointline and really shot the ball well. We flat-out folded against their pressure and did not execute much of anything in the second half. They are good (6-0) and very deserving of their ranking, but I am extremely disappointed in our second half performance. We must do a better job across the board to get over the hump." Against the Red Raiders, Northern got 17 points and 12 rebounds from Gaizutyte, while Taylor Keller scored 15 points and Schermele added 11. The Skylights (1-5) are back on the road this weekend for a tournament in Olympia, Wash. MSU-N faces Northwest University of Friday and Evergreen College on Saturday. Lights split in Butte A trip to a tournament hosted by Montana Tech in Butte got off to a rocky start for the Montana State University- Northern men's basketball team — but it didn't end that way. On Friday night, the Lights were overtaken by the Eastern Oregon Mountaineers in a 64-57 loss, but Northern returned Saturday night and drubbed Walla Walla College, 96-58, to even its record to 3-3 on the young season. Friday night's game against the Mountaineers was a tale of two halves for the Lights. MSU-N came out firing as Andrew Sellars knocked down three first-half 3-pointers and helped MSU-N to a 36-25 halftime lead. At one point, the Lights were ahead by as much as 19 points in the first half. But the Mounties took over in the second half and whittled away the Lights' lead, eventually taking control of the game in the final five minutes. Northern's defense was good throughout the night, but the Lights struggled to make shots in the final 20 minutes of the game, while EOU got hot down the stretch. Sellars and Clay Greenland led the way for the Lights on Friday, scoring 17 and 16 points, respectively. Eric Tisby added 10 points as well. "Friday was disappointing considering the fact we were up eleven at half, had them down fourteen at one point and came out on the losing end," MSUN head coach Shawn Huse said. "We missed some key shots and free throws, as well as had some timely turnovers or we would have had a great opportunity to win it. We have to take advantage of those kinds of leads if we're going to be great in league play. "Give Eastern credit as they battled back and made the big shots that gave them the lead the last few minutes of the game," he added. "They were very determined after their tough loss at Western (MT) the night before (up the whole game and lost it only the last 3.5 seconds of the game). We have to move past it quickly as we play them again Friday. We need to continue working hard in practice this week, get some things cleaned up, and prepare to give them another shot right away." Northern did put the EOU loss aside quickly enough too. On Saturday in Butte, the Lights fought off a strong effort by Walla Walla in the first half, and then

dismantled the Wolves in the second half, outscoring them 51-22 in the final frame. Sellars had another big night for Northern, scoring 23 points and hitting three treys. Waylenn Burgess added 15 points and eight rebounds, while Greenland scored 12 points and grabbed eight boards. The Lights also got 11 points from Terrell Osborne off the bench, while Tisby added 10 in Northern's second win over the Wolves in the last three years. "We received strong leadership all weekend from Andrew (Sellars)," Huse said. "He played two very good all-around games and kept all of his teammates where they were suppose to be on both ends of the floor. I am very pleased with the vocal leadership and hustle he is showing as a fifth-year Northern Light. "We felt like everyone was on the same page Saturday and it showed. Walla Walla is a dangerous team, having beaten Montana Tech earlier this season, and is very capable of scoring in bunches," Huse added. "Our guys were visibly determined as they got a lead and built on it all night. We were extremely active on defense, took an unofficial count of eight charges in the game, including four from Walynn (Burgess). Having patience with this new bunch is key for our staff — and is easier to do when they continue to correct their mistakes the way they did Saturday." The Lights will be back at it this weekend in Lewiston, Idaho. Northern plays Evergreen College on Friday night and has a rematch with EOU on Saturday.