Neither game counted, but both will certainly make the Montana State University-Northern women's basketball team better.

On Friday and Saturday in Bellingham, Wash., the Skylights dropped a pair of exhibition games to NCAA Division II opponents from the GNAC, the same league Montana State-Billings plays in.

And while the Skylights may have struggled to keep pace with both St. Martins University and perennial DII power Western Washington, they didn't play poorly either, and both games will have lasting benefits as the Skylights inch closer to Frontier Conference play, which is just a little over a month away.

On Friday night, Northern took on St. Martins and fell 71-47. But the Skylights played an outstanding first half and trailed just 29-22 at the break. However, St. Martins got hot from the field in the second half and outscored MSU-N 42-25 the rest of the way. Still, in the loss, the Skylights showed good signs, especially in the first half where they shot 38 percent from the field and played solid defense throughout.

MSU-N senior Taylor Keller led the way, scoring 16 points on a 5-for-7 performance from the floor. Keller also went 5-for-6 from the foul line, while dishing out three assists. Samm Schermele added nine points and four rebounds for the Skylights, while Laramie Schwenke scored seven. St. Martins got a game-high 17 points from Marelle Moehrle, and offensive rebounds were also key as St. Martins got 14 second-chance points to MSU-N's two.

Facing another DII power on Saturday night, the Skylights were again outsized and the second half again proved to be Northern's undoing.

In a 59-36 loss to Western Washington, the tournament host, the Skylights trailed by just eight points at the half, 26-18. But as well as Northern played on defense in the first 20 minutes, and the Skylights did play well, Western turned up the heat in the second half and outscored the Skylights 33-18 to win going away.

In Saturday's game, Northern's defense was outstanding, but turnovers hurt the Skylights. They gave the ball away 19 times and Western turned those miscues into 26 points. The 3-point shot was also key. Western hit 11 three's in the game, while the Skylights hit just two long-range shots.

In the low-scoring affair, Schermele paced MSU-N with 11 points, while Keller added nine points and four assists. Schwenke also scored seven points in the loss. Western got a game-high 16 points and four treys from Amanda Dunbar.

The two losses in Bellingham don't affect Northern's 3-5 record, but both games will certainly prepare the Skylights for another daunting road trip this weekend. The Skylights will be in Salt Lake City for a pair of games this weekend, starting with a game against Golden State Athletic Conference powerhouse The Masters College on Friday afternoon. Northern will also play William Jessup College on Saturday afternoon.

The Skylights next play at home on Dec. 16 when they host the University of Great Falls in a nonconference game.
Saint Martins 71, Skylights 47

**MSU-N** — Keller, Taylor 5-17 5-6 16; Schermele, Samm 2-10 4-4 9; Schwenke, Laramie 3-6 1-2 7; Hollowell, Monica 3-8 0-0 6; Blume, Courtney 2-3 0-0 5; Bruursema, Jordan 1-3 2-2 4; Howe-Cobb, Michaela 0-0 0-0 0; Tramelli, Stren 0-1 0-0 0; Wilk, Nicole 0-2 0-0 0; Gee, Val 0-0 0-2 0; Denham, Kylee 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 16-50 12-16 47.

**SM** — Moehrle,Marelle 5-11 3-3 17; Zack,Dara 4-9 4-4 13; Snyder,Kellie 3-6 2-2 8; Mielke, Roni Jo 3-5 1-1 8; Worley,Heather 3-7 0-1 6; Baker,Kelsey 2-7 1-1 5; Schutt,Andrea 1-4 2-2 4; Teade,Megan 1-5 0-0 3; Hawkins,Katie 0-0 3-4 3; Lining,Britanie 0-0 2-2 2; Haskey,Chelsea 0-1 2-2 2; Schang,Destiny 0-2 0-0 0. Totals 22-57 20-22 71.

3-point goals--Montana State Northern 3-20 (Schermele, Samm 1-5; Blume, Courtney 1-1; Keller, Taylor 1-5; Bruursema, Jordan 0-1; Wilk, Nicole 0-1; Hollowell, Monica 0-4; Schwenke, Laramie 0-3), Saint Martin's 7-19 (Moehrle,Marelle 4-10; Zack,Dara 1-2; Mielke, Roni Jo 1-1; Teade,Megan 1-2; Schang,Destiny 0-2; Baker,Kelsey 0-1; Snyder,Kellie 0-1). Fouled out--Montana State Northern-None, Saint Martin's-None. Rebounds--Montana State Northern 26 (Bruursema, Jordan 8), Saint Martin's 47 (Baker,Kelsey 7). Assists--Montana State Northern 8 (Schwenke, Laramie 4), Saint Martin's 15 (Zack,Dara 5). Total fouls--Montana State Northern 19, Saint Martin's 16. Technical fouls--Montana State Northern-None, Saint Martin's-None. A-160

Western Washington 59, Skylights 36

**MSU-N** — Schermele, Samm 4-8 3-4 11; Keller, Taylor 2-10 4-4 9; Schwenke, Laramie 2-4 2-2 7; Blume, Courtney 2-3 0-0 4; Bruursema, Jordan 1-7 1-2 3; Gee, Val 1-10-0 2; Tramelli, Stren 0-0 0-0 0; Hollowell, Monica 0-3 0-0 0; Wilk, Nicole 0-0 0-0 0; Denham, Kylee 0-1 0-0 0. Totals 12-37 10-12 36.

**WW** — Dunbar,Amanda 6-18 0-2 16; Pinske,Megan 4-9 3-4 12; Schramm,Kristin 3-7 0-0 9; Waltrip,Corinn 3-10 0-0 9; Wade,Gabby 3-7 1-2 7; Hefflin,Lauren 2-6 1-2 5; Harris,Britt 0-0 1-2 1; Pounds,Marcel 0-0 0-0 0; Ramstead,Erika 0-2 0-0 0. Totals 21-59 6-12 59.

3-point goals--Montana State Northern 2-10 (Keller, Taylor 1-4; Schwenke, Laramie 1-1; Bruursema, Jordan 0-2; Hollowell, Monica 0-1; Denham, Kylee 0-1; Schermele, Samm 0-1), Western Washington 11-32 (Dunbar,Amanda 4-14; Waltrip,Corinn 3-8; Schramm,Kristin 3-6; Pinske,Megan 1-2; Ramstead,Erika 0-2). Fouled out--Montana State Northern-None, Western Washington-None. Rebounds--Montana State Northern 25 (Bruursema, Jordan 3; Schermele, Samm 3; Gee, Val 3; Hollowell, Monica 3), Western Washington 40 (Hefflin,Lauren 9). Assists--Montana State Northern 7 (Keller, Taylor 4), Western Washington 14 (Waltrip,Corinn 4). Total fouls--Montana State Northern 7, Western Washington 12. Technical fouls--Montana State Northern-None, Western Washington-None.