MSU-Northern women survive a scare from Concordia

George Ferguson, Havre Daily News sports editor
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It wasn’t easy. It wasn’t pretty at times, but when it mattered most, the Montana State University-Northern women’s basketball team found a way to win at home.

Playing without injured point guard and leading scorer Taylor Keller, the Skylights struggled at times against Concordia College of Alberta, but used a late 7-0 charge to upend the Thunder 57-45 Sunday night at the MSU-Northern Fieldhouse.

“I feel like we only played about 7 minutes of basketball like we are supposed to play,” Northern head coach Chris Mouat said. “And we did that down the stretch. We played with energy and mental toughness and that won us the game in that seven minutes. If we had not picked it up at that point, we would have lost. So while there were some positives in that seven minutes, and we’ll certainly take the win, the rest of the game was very disappointing.

The Skylights started strong on defense, holding Concordia without a field goal for over 10 minutes in the first half. The Thunder drought and a pair of 3-pointers from Jordan Bruursema and Samm Schermele staked the Skylights to an early 15-6 lead.

But Concordia fought back with an 8-0 run of its own and led 25-22 at halftime as Northern struggled from the floor and committed 11 of their 14 turnovers in the first half.

Concordia continued to stymie Northern early in the second half with a daunting full-court press. And with 6-1 center Megan Vande Kraats dominating down low, the Thunder built a five-point lead with 11:45 left in the game.

“Other than how we played the last seven or eight minutes, it was as sloppy as we’ve been all year,” Mouat said. “That was certainly the worst we’ve looked, and it goes to show that if you don’t come out ready to play, you’re going to get beat by anybody. And we would have tonight if it wasn’t for how we played down the stretch.”

But with their backs against the wall, the Skylights responded.

They ripped off a quick 7-0 run behind three’s from Schermele and Bruursema yet again. Northern also clamped down on defense as Laramie Schwenke came up with two big steals and Courtney Blume came up big on the boards (she grabbed a game-high 10 rebounds).

And by the time the run was through, MSU-N had wrestled the lead away from the Thunder at 44-38 with seven minutes left to play. And the Skylights never trailed again.

In Keller’s absence, Bruursema stepped up big, scoring a game-high 18 points and grabbing five rebounds. Blume also had a stellar outing, earning a double-double with 11 points and 10 rebounds. Schermele added 14 points and five board, while Schwenke grabbed nine rebounds of her own. The rebounds were a key to Northern’s success as the Skylights totaled 42 boards including 14 on the offensive end.
“As poorly as we played for much of that game, there are some positives too,” Mouat said. “Samm (Schermele) really made some great plays down the stretch, she made some great decision with the ball. And Jordan (Bruursema) and Courtney (Blume) both did an outstanding job. That’s two good games in a row for both of them. Jordan, when she gets her outside shot going, and she is a good very good shooter, she is really going to be a handful to guard because she can do it in the post, she can shoot the three and she can drive to the basket. So it’s good to see her game coming on strong.

“And I was pleased with the way we pulled it together and found a way to get it done in the end,” Mouat said. “It was good to see us respond to some adversity. But it’s also adversity we have to take responsibility floor. We created that situation ourselves, so we need to do a much better job next time out.”

The win was Northern’s third straight and second in a row on its home floor. The Skylights are now 6-6 overall heading into their last home game of the nonconference season.

MSU-N will host Kings College of Alberta on Wednesday night at 6 p.m.

Skylights 57, Concordia 45

CUCA — Kaylie Mattiussi 1-2 0-1 2, Stephanie Balog 1-5 0-1 2, Megan Vande Kraats 6-13 3-5 16, Erika Bergum 5-14 0-0 14, Jordan Anstice 3-6 0-0 7, PJ Wells 1-4 0-2 2, Cara Zamburek 1-4 0-0 2, Kristen McCurdy 0-1 0-0 0, Meghan Allison 0-1 0-0 0, Alexandra Schlegel 0-1 0-0 0. Totals 18-51 3-9 45

MSU-N — Laramie Schwenke 1-5 2-2 5, Kylee Denham 1-2 0-0 2, Samm Schermele 3-16 6-6 14, Valerie Gee 0-0 2-2 2, Jordan Bruursema 7-12 2-3 18, Nicole Wilk 1-6 1-2 4, Courtney Blume 4-6 3-4 11, Monica Hollowell 0-5 0-0 0, Stren Tramelli 0-2 1-2 1. Totals 17-54 17-21 57