HDN Athlete Profile: Laramie Schwenke
MSU-N’s Schwenke feeling good, and playing with a purpose
George Ferguson, Havre Daily News sports editor
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Montana State University-Northern junior Laramie Schwenke has been to the mountain top of high school basketball, having won a Class B state championship with the powerful Malta M-Ettes in a 2007 undefeated season.

But Schwenke has also endured the lows of the game of basketball, having had to miss most of her first two seasons with the Skylights because of injuries. And that’s why what Schwenke is doing this season is so remarkable. In her third year at Northern, the former Malta great is having one of the most well-rounded seasons in the Frontier Conference. She’s averaging nine points, five rebounds, three assists and two steals per game, all from her point guard position. And with the Skylights being plagued by injuries all season long, Schwenke’s season is even more important as the Skylights are still very much in the conference race.

And with Schwenke healthy and playing an aggressive, versatile style of basketball in which she seems to be all over the floor, Northern is entering the stretch run of 2011 playing its best basketball of the season.

As the Skylights prepare to host UM-Western and Montana Tech this weekend, here’s five questions with Northern’s do-it-all guard.

**HDN**: Missing most of the last two years with injuries, how exciting and gratifying is it to be playing so well this season?

**Schwenke**: “It’s great, it’s awesome. I think that being hurt really gave me an appreciation for the game, it made me appreciate what I have. Being hurt taught me life lessons and it made me not take anything for granted. It’s a privilege to play college basketball and go to school and missing the last couple of seasons really gave me a whole new outlook. I play every game like it’s my last now.”

**HDN**: You’ve led the team in rebounding several times this year. What makes you such an effective rebounder as a point guard?

**Schwenke**: “My dad just said that to me the other day. He said: “where did you learn to rebound like that all of a sudden?” I don’t honestly know. I think I just try to be as aggressive as I can be. Some of it is being in the right place at the right time, but coach also talks all the time about playing aggressively. It’s like being in a fist-fight out there sometimes, so I just try to get in there and play as aggressive as I can.”

**HDN**: How far can the Skylights go this season?

**Schwenke**: “I think we all realize we dug ourselves a hole earlier in there year. But we’ve got it rolling now. We have a lot left to play for, and as a team, we realize we can play with anybody and beat anybody. The league is a mess right now. We’re only a game out of third place at this point and we have
four of our last six games at home. And we always fight to defend our home court. So we definitely have a lot left to play for and a lot we want to achieve this season.”

**HDN:** Why has the Malta girls program been able to sustain this level of success over the last 20-plus years?

**Schwenke:** “Girls in Malta start playing at a young age. I didn’t move there until 5th grade, but I knew right away it was a basketball town. Parents take kids on traveling teams and to summer tournaments, outside of the high school season. And now you have parents of kids who went through the program themselves, so it’s just really become something you either do or you don’t. And the coaching staff has been great. Coach Lindgren has been there through it all, so that makes a big difference. It’s just something the town is very proud of.”

**HDN:** With all the great players who’ve come out of Malta, including yourself, who is one you really looked up to or wanted to be like.

**Schwenke:** “She finished her career in Havre, but Jolene Fuzesy is someone who really was amazing to me. She was a great player, and I can remember being at the playground in Malta when I was younger, and her and the other high school players asking me to play with them. That was just awesome to me. So she’s definitely one I really looked up to as a player.”