RMC trips MSU-Northern women at the finish line

George Ferguson, Havre Daily News sports editor
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The Montana State University-Northern women’s basketball team suffered its share of heartache during last weekend’s back-to-back home losses.

And things didn’t get any easier on Thursday night. In Billings Thursday night, the Skylights fell 59-58 in a thriller to Rocky Mountain College, and with the loss, all hope of playing at home in the upcoming Frontier Conference playoffs is likely gone.

But as difficult and disappoint as Thursday’s loss to the Bears, the bright spot was, the skylights played well, but just came up short as Laramie Schwenke missed a shot with just over a second left to play, and Samm Schermele missed another as the buzzer sounded.

“‘It hurts to lose it at the end like that,’ Northern head coach Chris Mouat said. ‘And it’s a tough loss because we felt like we played really well for much of the game. Rocky is a very tough team to beat on their home floor, yet we came out and jumped on them early. We played a great first half, built a big lead, and then didn’t do enough to finish it. We didn’t play smart basketball with the lead, we missed some important shots, and really, they (Bears) scored one more point than we did. So it’s tough, but we just have to keep moving forward.’”

Northern’s defense was stellar all night, but especially in the first half. The Skylights led 32-21 at the break and held RMC to under 30 percent from the floor in the first 20 minutes. But Mouat said the second half was a different story. The Bears’ size wore on the Skylights and they came back to make it game for the final 15 minutes.

“I thought we did some really good things,” Mouat said. “But we also made some mistakes with the lead that hurt us and allowed them to get back in the game. They deserve a lot of credit, they are a good team and they came back on us. But we just didn’t finish in the second half. But I’m very proud of our effort and the way we started the game. Our kids came ready to play, and we’ll just have to try and do that again on Saturday.”

Courtney Blume led four Skylights in double figures with 15 points, while Schermele scored 14 and Jordan Bruursema added 13 points and six rebounds. Schwenke chipped in with 10 points and six boards as the Skylights fell to 3-8 in conference play and 12-15 overall.

Northern will hope to bounce back on Saturday when it plays Carroll College in Helena.