Skylights add a pair of post players
George Ferguson, Havre Daily News sports editor
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The Montana State University-Northern women’s basketball team has added a post presence to its 2011 recruiting class. Northern head coach Chris Mouat has recently announced the signing of two 6-1 post players, both of whom will play for the Skylights next fall.

Joining the Skylights is 6-1 post Kelly Millager from Tualatin, Ore. She recently completed her second season at Southwestern Oregon Community College in Coos Bay, Ore. This season, Millager averaged 11.4 points and 7.4 rebounds per game. She shot over percent from the field and blocked 40 shots.

"Kelly is a good addition to our program," Mouat said. "She brings size and athleticism to the post position. Her upside is very exciting. Kelly’s ability to run the floor and make plays because of her length are things that jumped at us right away. We are very excited about her future here."

As both a freshman and sophomore, Millager was named a second team All-Southern region selection in the NWAACC (Northwest Athletic Association of Community Colleges). She was also an NWAACC All-Star Game pick this year. She helped Southwestern to an 18-10 overall record.

Millager was a three-sport standout at Southwestern, where she was also a key member of the school’s volleyball and track and field teams.

In track and field, Millager was the 2010 NWAACC high jump champion and she finished fourth in the heptathalon. She also earned NWAACC Athlete of the Week honors, and was a track and field All-American. In volleyball, she earned honorable mention All-Conference honors as a freshman, second team all-conference honors as a sophomore, and was selected to play in the NWAACC All-Star Game.

At Tualatin High School, Millager was a two-time, first team all-league pick. She earned all-league honors in volleyball as a junior (honorable mention) and as a senior (second team). She earned countless accolades in track and field during her prep career, including a pair of state championships in the high jump as a junior and senior. She was Tualatin High Schools Female Athlete of the Year as a senior.

"Kelly is athletic and has been pretty unique in the fact that she’s been able to excel in three sports at the college level," Mouat said. "We are excited to see her progress as basketball becomes a primary focus."

Millager plans on studying graphic design at MSU-Northern. She is the daughter of Susie Millager.

Also joining the Skylights this fall is Sara Paponjak, a 6-1 post from Whatcom Community College in Bellingham, Wash. Paponjak is a 2009 graduate of Foster High School in Seattle. She played her first season of collegiate basketball at NCAA Division II Central Washington, and later transferred to Whatcom for her sophomore season.

"Sara is a great addition for us. She is a very strong post player with great hands and she finishes well,” Mouat said. "She has a good feel for the game and makes good decisions with the ball in her hands. Plus, she’s proven herself to be a great rebounder. We were very impressed with her work ethic and are excited about her future in a Skylight uniform."

Paponjak is a native of Tukwila, Wash. She and her family moved to the United States in 1996 to escape civil war in Bosnia.
At Foster High School, Paponjak left her mark as one of the most decorated basketball players in school history. She was a first-team all-conference performer for all four years of her high school career. She led her conference in scoring for three consecutive years, and helped Foster High School to a Class 2A State Tournament appearance as a sophomore. As a junior, she was named the conference’s Most Valuable Player. She also set the school record for the biggest double-double, tallying 32 points and 20 rebounds in a single game.

Sara is the daughter of Borka and Dragan Paponjak.