Skylights will have plenty of big games
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The Montana State University-Northern women’s basketball team is well known for playing one of the most rigorous nonconference schedules each and every season.

And the 2011-12 season will be no different. In the first three months of the upcoming Skylights’ season, they will face a pair of NCAA Division II powers, as well as play an exhibition game against the famed University of Montana Lady Griz. Also making things tough for the Skylights will be the fact that they’ll play 11 of their first 12 games on the road.

Northern will open its season early, hosting The King’s University of Edmonton, Alberta on Oct. 8 in Havre. After that, Northern hits the road and won’t play at home again until Dec. 8 when the Skylights host Dickinson State, a future Frontier Conference opponent. Northern then wraps ups December with three games in its own tournament Dec. 15-17 and a final nonconference tilt against Mount Royal University of Canada on New Years Eve.

The MSU-Northern tournament will be three challenging games for the Skylights in three nights. MSU-N will face LaSierra University, Hope International and Minot State University in a featured game. Minot is a former NAIA DII powerhouse, but the Beavers are now an NCAA DII and against the Skylights in Havre, the game will count towards MSU-N’s record. The tournament will also feature UGF and Carroll College.

But before the Skylights even get to December, they will already have seen the likes of the Beavers, Blue Hawks and many other tough teams.

MSU-N starts its two-month road trip with three games against top-level Canadian teams in Calgary Oct. 13-15. Then, on Nov. 7 in Missoula, the Skylights will square off against the Lady Griz in an exhibition game in famed Dahlberg Arena. The Lady Griz are coming of an NCAA women’s national tournament appearance last spring, and return a host of talented players. The Skylights last played UM in the 2008-09 season.

The month of November will also see the Skylights play a pair of games at a tournament hosted by UGF in Great Falls before heading to Billings for a pair of tough games against NCAA DII stalwarts. In Billings, MSU-N will take on Minot in an exhibition game, but the Skylights will also face Minnesota State Moorhead, another NCAA DII power in a counter game. Northern wraps up November with a trip to Dickinson State, and they open December with a visit to Salt Lake City for three games in the Westminster Tournament.

And that’s all before Frontier Conference play even begins.

Northern begins its tough league schedule with three straight home games and five of its first seven conference games at the MSU-Northern Fieldhouse. The Skylights host UGF on Jan. 6 to open league play. The second half of the conference schedule gets more difficult as the Skylights play five of their last seven on the road, including regular-season finales at Westminster on Feb. 23 and Lewis-Clark State on Feb. 28. Northern’s home finale is Feb. 17-18 against Rocky Mountain College and Carroll College, respectively.

The Frontier Conference playoffs begin March 1 and the NAIA national tournament is set for March 16-22 in Jackson, Tenn.
2011-12 Skylights Basketball Schedule

Oct. 8 vs Kings University
Oct. 13 Mount Royal University at Calgary, AB
Oct. 14 Lethbridge University at Calgary
Oct. 15 University of British Columbia-Okanagan at Calgary

Nov. 7 at University of Montana (EX)
Nov. 18 Central Baptist at Great Falls
Nov. 19 Valley City at Great Falls
Nov. 25 Minnesota State-Moorhead at Billings
Nov. 26 Minot State (EX) at Billings
Nov. 28 at Dickinson State

Dec. 1-3 at Westminster Tournament in Salt Lake City
Dec. 8 vs Dickinson State
Dec. 15-17 MSU-Northern Tournament vs La Sierra University and Minot State
Dec. 31 vs Mount Royal University

Jan. 6 vs Great Falls
Jan. 13 vs Montana Tech
Jan. 14 vs UM-Western
Jan. 19 at Carroll College
Jan. 21 at Rocky Mountain
Jan. 27 vs Lewis-Clark State
Jan. 28 vs Westminster

Feb. 4 at Great Falls
Feb. 10 at UM-Western
Feb. 11 at Montana Tech
Feb. 17 vs Rocky Mountain
Feb. 18 vs Carroll College
Feb. 23 at Westminster
Feb. 25 at Lewis-Clark State

March 1-6 Frontier Playoffs
March 16-22 NAIA Tournament at Jackson, Tenn.