Skylights dominant at home
George Ferguson
Sunday, October 9th, 2011

It’s a brand new season and a mostly brand new Montana State University-Northern women’s basketball team.

And that’s what made the Skylights’ 73-36 season-opening win over the King’s University Eagles Saturday afternoon at the MSU-Northern Fieldhouse so impressive. The Skylights played a ton of new faces, mixed with some returning veterans and had little trouble vanquishing the Eagles of Edmonton, Alberta.

“By in large we were ready to go,” Northern head coach Chris Mouat said. “I thought everybody who got to play was ready and with only eight practices in, I was pretty happy with how we played. I thought we executed pretty well, we played very hard and we had good intensity and energy. It was a good start for us.”

It was an especially good start considering the Eagles proved to be anything but a pushover in the first half. The Skylights raced out on an early 11-2 run sparked by junior college transfer Nikki Tresch’s shooting, as well as some early steals and good defense. But the Eagles responded and narrowed the gap to 15-12 midway through the first half.

However, Tresch hit two more 3-pointers, including one at the first-half buzzer to push Northern to a 33-19 halftime lead.

From that point, the Skylights were in command.

Northern upped the lead to 16 points at the 14:36 mark of the second half on another triple by Tresch, and the Eagles never threatened again.

The Skylights made 10 three’s against King’s and they forced the Eagles into a massive 32 turnovers. Northern also won the battle of the boards 40-39. Tresch led all scorers with 19 points, while Jordan Bruursema, Kylee Denham, Rachelle Bennett and Micah Kirkpatrick all scored six points each. There were more bright spots individually as well. Red shirt-freshman Taylor Cummings had a huge debut for the Skylights, scoring 10 points, grabbing six rebounds, dishing out five assists and three steals. Not to be outdone, sophomore forward Laci Keller had a strong return, scoring 12 points and grabbing four rebounds. Keller hadn’t played in a competitive game since March of 2009 after sitting out all of last season with a back injury.

“I was really proud of Taylor Cummings,” Mouat said. “She came in and proved she was ready to go. She did a great job executing and she showed she’s ready to play at this level.

“And this was a really good game to work Laci back in,” he added. “Because their (Eagles) center is a big, strong, tough player. And Laci did a really good job. It was a great first game back for her.”

But with the good Saturday came some tough moments as well. Cummings did a great job as noted, but her minutes were extended because senior point guard Laramie Schwenke went down with what appeared...
to be a knee injury halfway through the first stanza. Schwenke was in obvious pain and had to be helped off the floor, favoring the same knee she’s had surgically repaired in the past. Schwenke is set to undergo more evaluation today.

Northern’s 10 3-pointers were good, but the Skylights did attempt 31 long-range bombs. MSU-N also shot just 38 percent for the game, so Mouat, while pleased with the opener, saw plenty to work on.

Still, it was a stellar season-opening win for the Skylights and one Mouat will gladly take.

“In all honesty, I would have liked to see us shoot the ball better today,” he said. “The execution was good, we got a lot of open shots with what we were running. We just need to make more of them. And I didn’t think we rebounded as well as we needed too. And Laramie going down was really tough. She’s such an important part of everything we do.

“But aside from those things, I was really happy with how this game went,” he added. “We did some really good things, we worked a lot of kids into the mix and they all did a good job. We’ll take this game and learn a lot from it, and go get ready for some tough road games coming up.”

The Skylights (1-0) head to Calgary for games Thursday-Saturday against CIS level Canadian teams, before returning home to face another CIS power in the University of Lethbridge on Thursday, Oct. 20 at the MSU-Northern Fieldhouse.

Note: See Tuesday's Havre Daily News for more on the Northern men and women's basketball teams and the Frontier Conference.

**MSU-N women start 1-0**

**Skylights 73, King’s University 36**

**KU** — Julie Heavenor 1-3 2-2 5, Makenzie Johnston 0-1 0-0 0, Alexa Sackela-Giger 1-2 0-0 2, Samantha Tennant 0-7 0-0 0, Vanessa Gulayets 0-1 0-0 0, Alyx Aarbo 0-0 0-0 0, Karina Leslie 3-7 4-6 10, Tamara Deunk 5-10 0-0 10, Chelsea Dyck 3-8 0-0 7, Lauren Jordan 0-2 0-0 0, Jessica Anderson 1-4 0-0 2. Totals 14-45 6-8 36.

**MSU-N** — Nikki Tresch 7-13 0-0 19, Laramie Schwenke 0-3 2-2 2, Kylee Denham 2-8 1-2 6, Rachelle Bennett 3-6 0-0 6, Taylor Cummings 4-12 1-2 10, Leah Olson 0-5 1-2 1, Jordan Bruuresma 3-11 0-0 6, Micah Kirkpatrick 2-3 0-0 6, Michaela Howe-Cobb 2-3 0-0 5, Laci Keller 5-9 2-2 12. Totals 28-73 7-10 73.

**Halftime: MSU-N 33-19; 3-pt FG: King’s 2-9 (Heavenor 1-1, Tennant 0-4, Dyck 1-2, Jordan 0-1, Anderson 0-1), MSU-N 10-31 (Tresch 5-10, Schwenke 0-2, Denham 1-3, Cummings 1-6, Olson 0-4, Bruuresma 0-2, Kirkpatrick 2-3, Howe-Cobb 1-1). Rebounds: King’s 39 (Deunk 9), MSU-N 40 (Bennett 6, Cummings 6). Fouls: King’s University 12, MSU-N 11. Fouled out: none. Technical: none.