MSU-N women take on vaunted Lady Griz tonight in Missoula

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When the Montana State University-Northern women’s basketball team resumes its season tonight, the Skylights’ perfect 5-0 record won’t be in jeopardy.

But make no mistake, Northern is in for the fight of its life tonight. MSU-N will travel to Missoula for an exhibition game against the famed University of Montana Lady Griz. The Grizzlies (0-0) will also be playing in exhibition mode tonight, but that doesn’t mean they won’t be trying to blow by Northern. UM won its first exhibition game, as the Griz trounced fellow Frontier Conference power Lewis-Clark State 77-58 last week in Missoula.

Tonight’s trip into famed Dahlberg Arena will be the second in the last four years for the Skylights. The Griz thumped the Skylights 69-34 back in December of 2008. But this Skylight team has a different look, and will certainly be at a disadvantage. Northern isn’t a tall team, and has already been without sophomore center Laci Keller for a period of time this season. Senior guard Laramie Schwenke is also injured, while junior guard Kylee Denham has also missed time this season. Tonight’s matchup, a heavy does of the Grizzlies’ size will fall to players like Kelly Millager, Jordan Bruursema and Rachelle Bennett, who’s play extremely well as a true freshmen.

Northern isn’t just short-handed tonight, the Skylights may also have a little rust. MSU-N hasn’t played since an Oct. 20 win over Lethbridge in Havre.

Meanwhile, the Skylight defense will get a true test. The Grizzlies, who went to the NCAA Tournament a year ago, boast a big front line, led by star forwards Katie Baker (6-0) and Jordan Sullivan (6-2) as well as freshman Carly Selvig (6-2). In all, the Griz will trot out six players over six foot and eight who stand 5-11 or better.

However, despite the obvious disadvantages, the Skylights will take tonight as an opportunity. They will battle one of the most historic women’s college basketball programs in all of the country, they will face the best team they will see all year and they’ll be better in the long run for having made tonight’s trip.

Tonight’s game between the Skylights and Lady Griz tips off at 7 in Missoula. The game can be streamed live at http://www.montanagrizzlies.com or gogriz.com. Northern will be off again until Nov. 18.