Skylights put up a fight against Lady Griz
George Ferguson
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It was just an exhibition game, but the Montana State University-Northern Skylights certainly made an impression on the famed University of Montana Lady Griz.

The final score said Montana 70, MSU-Northern 48, but the Skylights had their moments Monday night at Dahlberg Arena.

The Lady Griz imposed their will early on, going inside to tall starters like 6-2 Jordan Sullivan and 6-0 Katie Baker. And with Northern being undersized, the Griz built an early 21-5 lead. But a 7-0 run by Northern closed the gap to nine points in the first half, before the Griz again dominated the paint to lead 40-19 at intermission.

"We couldn't have started any worse than we did," Northern head coach Chris Mouat said. "We dug ourselves a big hole and you just can't do that against a team of their (Griz) caliber. But given our start, I thought we did a really good job of stopping the bleeding and by the end of the game we were matching them.

"So there are a lot of positives we can take away from this game," he added.

The game was pretty much out of reach as UM led 50-21 early in the second half, but the Skylights didn’t quit playing. Northern battled and again pulled the score closer via another 7-0 run midway through the second. In the end, the Skylights were only outscored 30-29 in the final 20 minutes of the contest.

And while the final margin was 22 points, the Skylights could certainly feel good about the way they played a team which went to the NCAA Tournament a year ago, and is picked to contend for a Big Sky Conference crown this season.

The Skylights were certainly out-manned and even when the Griz brought in bench players, Northern was still up against quality NCAA DI players and the Skylights hung tough to the very end.

Northern was sparked by the return of senior Laramie Schwenke who scored 15 points, but it was yet another impressive outing by junior Jordan Bruursema which helped Northern stay in the fight. Bruursema scored a game-high 17 points and pulled down eight rebounds, all while guarding and being guarded by UM’s huge front line. Nikki Tresch chipped in with eight points, and she, Schwenke and Bruursema each knocked down two 3-pointers.

UM was led by Sullivan with 14 points and 13 rebounds. Baker tossed in 13 points and Torry Hill had 11. The Griz and Skylights shot almost the same from three, each making seven long-range bombs, while as expected, Montana held a big edge on the boards. UM grabbed 44 rebounds as a team while the Skylights pulled down 32.

"I thought we played pretty well and Northern battled us pretty good," legendary Lady Griz coach Robin Selvig said. "We got a lead, but then it wasn't easy after that. They ran good things and we had a real workout defending.

"And they're scrappy on D. We hurt them down low, hurt them on offensive rebounds. But give Northern credit because we jumped on them and then it's a one-point game the second half. Obviously everybody got in there for us, but I thought we kept pretty organized."
But no matter the stats, the Skylights put on a good showing in a game that will only yield positives as the season goes along.

"I thought we played really hard for much of the game," Mouat said. "I thought our effort was great and it had to be because they (Griz) are a great team. They are very talented and they made us work for every little thing. So that was really good for us.

"I think we can take this experience, playing a great team like that, and really learn from it," he added. "We can learn from it and use it to our advantage as the season goes forward."

Northern is still 5-0 on the season and will return to the floor for a pair of games in Great Falls Nov. 18-19. The Grizzlies open their season for real Friday afternoon at the DePaul Tournament in Chicago.

Montana 70, Skylights 48

MSU-NORTHERN — BRUURSEMA, Jordan 6-15 3-6 17; SCHWENKE, Laramie 5-12 3-3 15; TRESCH, Nikki 3-10 0-0 8; KIRKPATRICK, Micah 1-1 0-0 3; DENHAM, Kylee 1-7 1-2 3; MILLAGER, Kelly 1-3 0-0 2; OLSON, Leah 0-1 0-0 0; BENNETT, Rachelle 0-1 0-0 0; HOWE, Michaela 0-0 0-0 0; CUMMINGS, Taylor 0-1 0-0 0. Totals 17-51 7-11 48.

MONTANA — SULLIVAN, Jordan 6-11 0-0 14; BAKER, Katie 6-12 1-2 13; HILL, Torry 4-8 0-0 11; DE BOER, Kenzie 1-3 7-8 9; COLE, Kellie 3-8 0-0 8; SELVIG, Carly 2-6 0-0 4; WARE, Tianna 2-3 0-0 4; HURLEY, Alexandra 1-2 0-0 2; VINING, Haley 1-3 0-0 2; DORAN, Hannah 1-4 0-0 2; RICKMAN, Maggie 0-3 1-2 1; SMITH, Alyssa 0-2 0-0 0. Totals 27-65 9-12 70.

MSU Northern  19  29  —   48
Montana            40  30  —   70

3-point goals--MSU Northern 7-21 (SCHWENKE, Laramie 2-7; TRESCH, Nikki 2-7; BRUURSEMA, Jordan 2-6; KIRKPATRICK, Micah 1-1), Montana 7-17 (HILL, Torry 3-6; COLE, Kellie 2-4; SULLIVAN, Jordan 2-3; VINING, Haley 0-1; DORAN, Hannah 0-1; SMITH, Alyssa 0-2). Fouled out--MSU Northern-None, Montana-SELVIG, Carly. Rebounds--MSU Northern 32 (BRUURSEMA, Jordan 8), Montana 44 (SULLIVAN, Jordan 13). Assists--MSU Northern 11 (SCHWENKE, Laramie 5), Montana 15 (HILL, Torry 5). Total fouls--MSU Northern 9, Montana 13. Technical fouls--MSU Northern-TEAM, Montana-None. A-2478