Skylights stun Dragons
George Ferguson
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The Montana State University-Northern women’s basketball team is on a roll right now. And nothing proved that fact more than what the Skylights did Friday night in Billings.

MSU-N went to a Thanksgiving weekend tournament hosted by MSU-Billings and managed a solid split against two NCAA Division II powers. Northern shocked a very good Minnesota-Moorhead squad, 65-61 on Friday night, before falling to Minot State 62-56 on Saturday afternoon.

And while both games were exhibitions and won’t count for or against MSU-N’s overall record, Friday’s win over the Dragons will still serve notice that the Skylights are for real this season.

“It was a great win for our team,” Northern head coach Chris Mouat said. “They (Dragons) are very, very good and they killed us on the board. They doubled us up on the rebounds, and they really were physical with us. But somehow, our kids just kept fighting, kept staying with it and they found a way at the end.

“I couldn’t be more proud of them.”

The Skylights trailed the Dragons 28-25 at halftime, but Northern’s solid play in the first half gave them a chance to have a chance down the stretch. And that’s exactly what the Skylights did. They kept staying close, overtook the Dragons midway through the second half and then showed some resiliency late.

Moorhead led 61-59 with under two minutes to play but a 3-pointer by Laramie Schwenke gave MSU-N the lead back and clutch free-throws by Nikki Tresch sealed the win.

“We played really well against a very good team,” Mouat said. “And while it doesn’t count towards our record, we got better tonight. We improved and we know we beat a very good team. Those are the things that matter to us.”

Tresch led the Skylights with 20 points including four three’s. Schwenke added 18 points and three trey’s while Kylee Denham added 13 points and four assists. Jordan Bruursema and Laci Keller combined for 10 rebounds. Northern’s stingy defense held the Dragons to just 32 percent shooting from the field and only six 3-pointers.

The Skylights continued to play good defense on Saturday afternoon against an old NAIA rival. But Minot State is now a DII school and the Beavers overcame a gutsy effort by Northern.

Down 11 at the half, the Skylights fought their way back into the contest in the final 20 minutes, but couldn’t quite get over the hump. Northern was down by as many as 16 points in the second half, but the Skylights stormed back to tie the game with just under six minutes to go. MSU-N actually went up by one point seconds later, but Minot closed the game on a 12-3 run.

Schwenke was again on fire, pouring in 23 points, including a career-high seven long-range bombs. Tresch added six points, while Keller scored seven points and pulled down eight rebounds. Kelly Millager scored four points and grabbed four boards while Bruursema chipped in with four points as well.

The loss to Minot also doesn’t count against Northern’s perfect start to the season but the Skylights will get a rematch with the Beavers on Dec. 16 in Havre. That game will be a game that will count towards both team’s records.
The Skylights are back on the road tonight when they face future Frontier Conference rival Dickinson State in Dickinson, N.D. Northern is on the road again next weekend at a tournament in Salt Lake City before finally returning home to face the Blue Hawks on Dec. 8.

**Minot St. 62, MSU-Northern 56**

Minot State — Lauren Safranski 10, Sacarra Molina 13, Katie Hardy 24, Carly Boag 10, Christina Boag 4, Morgan Klose 1.


**MSU-Northern 65, Minn. St.-Moorhead 61**

MSU-Northern — Laramie Schwenke 18, Nikki Tresch 20, Kylee Denham 13, Jordan Bruursema 1, Kelly Millager 2, Taylor Cummings 5, Laci Keller 6.

Minnesota State-Moorhead — Haley Thomforde 7, Kaycee Charette 7, Morgan Zabel 7, Angie Jetvig 17, Megan Strese 9, Taylor Kraft 6, Brittany Mayclin 5, Amber Huntington 3.