Payback: Skylights trounce Blue Hawks

George Ferguson
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It was just over a year ago – Nov. 12, 2010 to be exact that the Montana State University-Northern women’s basketball team suffered a horrific 89-50 loss in Dickinson, N.D. Flip the calendar forward one year and the Skylights avenged that loss to the Dickinson State Blue Hawks, and then some.

Northern wrapped up a three-game road swing Monday night by trouncing the Blue Hawks 78-49 in Dickinson, N.D., and the Skylights improved to a remarkable 8-0 in the process.

“Just very, very proud of our kids,” Northern head coach Chris Mouat said. “Not just for what they did tonight, but for what they’ve done so far this season. Our team chemistry has been tremendous. This is a new team, but they have bonded together, they have fought through a lot of adversity so far this season and they are really coming together more and more and it showed out there on the floor tonight.

“This win was a lot of fun for our team,” he added. “And it was a great win for our program.”

In many ways, Monday night’s game mirrored the 2010 contest at DSU, only this time, the Skylights did the dishing out. Northern jumped out by as many as 16 points in the first half and ultimately led by 10 at the break, 39-29. MSU-N’s hot shooting and staunch defense then never let the Blue Hawks come back in the final 20 minutes. The 10-point halftime margin was as close as DSU would get the rest of the way.

And Northern was balanced and prolific in all areas, much like the Blue Hawks were a year ago against the Skylights. MSU-N made an outstanding 13-of-22 3-pointers, shot better than 49 percent from the floor and outrebounded the Blue Hawks 42-30. The suffocating Skylight defense also forced the normally savvy Blue Hawks, who will join the Frontier Conference as a full-fledged member next season, into a game-high 21 turnovers.

“We were really balanced tonight,” Mouat said. “I thought on offense, we just ran our stuff really well. We executed at a very high level and we made shots. On defense, our kids gave a tremendous, 40-minute effort and we really took them out of things they were trying to run. We also didn’t let their big guns hurt us.

“And we outrebounded them by a pretty big margin,” he added. “That’s something we’ve struggled with against Dickinson in the past and something we’ve wanted to be better at this season. So overall, it was just a great team effort on both ends of the floor.”

The Skylights also benefitted from a red-hot Laramie Schwenke. Just two days after the senior guard drilled a career-high seven three’s against Minot State, Schwenke poured in five more on Monday and scored a game-high 25 points. She also pulled down nine rebounds. Kylee Denham and Nikki Tresch both added big outings as well. Denham scored a season-high 15 points and made a pair of three’s while Tresch added 14 points and made four shots from beyond the arc. Jordan Bruursema was the fourth Skylight to reach double figures, scoring 13 points while pulling down eight rebounds. Kelly Millager added seven boards to Northern’s commanding total.

Monday night’s win also gives the Skylights even more confidence, and a 2-1 record on a difficult road trip. MSU-N also knocked off NCAA DII power Minnesota-Moorhead on Friday night and the Skylights now stand as the only Frontier school still without a loss this season.

Northern has one more road trip left on its nonconference schedule, as the Skylights head to Salt Lake City to play in the Westminster Classic on Friday and Saturday.
“This was a great win for us,” Mouat said. “But more importantly, we just keep improving with every game and that’s really what this time of year is all about. I’m just really proud of the kids for continuing to find ways to get better and get it done. It was just a lot of fun tonight.”

Skylights 78, Dickinson State 49

MSU-N — Jordan Bruursema 5-13 2-2 13, Laci Keller 1-1 1-1 3, Laramie Schwenke 7-15 6-9 25, Nikki tresch 5-8 0-0 14, Kylee Denham 4-6 3-3 15, Rachelle Bennett 1-1 0-0 2, Taylor Cummings 0-2 1-2 1, Micah Kirkpatrick 1-1 0-0 3, Kelly Millager 1-4 0-4 2. Totals: 25-52 15-24 78.

DSU — N/A

Halftime: Northern 39-29; 3-point field goals: MSU-N 13-22 (Bruursema 1, Schwenke 5, tresch 4, Denham 2, Kirkpatrick 1), DSU 7-17 (N/A); Rebounds: MSU-N 42 (Schwenke 9, Bruursema 8, Millager 7), DSU 30 (N/A); Fouls: MSU-N 14, DSU 21; Fouled out: None.