Skylights split games in Salt Lake City
Monday, December 5th, 2011

Life on the road has been long and arduous for the Montana State University-Northern women’s basketball team. But for the near future, road trips came to end this weekend in Salt Lake City.

Northern’s eight-game winning streak also came to an end on Friday night as the Skylights fell to Simpson University 67-66 at the Westminster Classic. But Northern bounced right back and thumped a good Holy Names’ squad by a score of 81-66.

Against Holy Names, the Skylights quickly bounced back from a difficult loss on Friday. Northern jumped out of the gates quick and wound up leading 42-30 at halftime.

In the second half, the Hawks closed the gap to eight points early on, but the Skylights’ defense allowed the offense to keep coming and Northern ballooned the lead back up to 18 points with 13 minutes to play. From there, the Hawks never really threatened again.

“We got out of the gate really well,” Northern head coach Chris Mouat said. “We hit shots early, we handled their pressure, which is what we didn’t do well on Friday. I thought we defended really well, and they (Hawks) had a couple of really good big kids. But we defended well and we won on the boards. Those things and just handling their pressure were big keys for us.”

The Skylights only had three players reach double figures in Saturday’s win, but guards Laramie Schwenke and Nikki Tresch combined for 45 points. Schwenke scored a game-high 25 points on 9-of-13 shooting with two 3-pointers. Schwenke, who has been red-hot of late, also pulled down nine rebounds and dished out five assists. Tresch added 20 points and also made a pair of three’s. Kylee Denham hit two long-range bombs as well, and scored 14 points. Jordan Bruursema chipped in with eight points and nine rebounds as the Skylights outrebounded the Hawks 48-42 and the MSU-N defense held them to just 33 percent shooting from the field.

“The big thing about Friday was we just didn’t handle their pressure, and it’s pressure we have seen all season long,” Mouat said. “We turned the ball over way too much and that was disappointing. But also credit to Simpson because they played really well and they beat us. It was one of those nights where they had an answer for everything we did, so you have to give them a ton of credit.
“It was a wake-up call for our kids and they realize what happens when we don’t show up ready to play our best,” he added. “But in spite of everything we didn’t do well on Friday and everything they (Red Hawks) did do well, we still had a shot to win at the end. There’s no moral victories and we were very disappointed in that loss, but if there’s something we can take away form it’s that in spite of everything we still were right there at the end. I’m just really proud that our kids came right back and were ready to go against Holy Names the next morning. They did a great, great job of responding to adversity this weekend.”

The road split in Salt Lake brings Northern home with an 9-1 overall record. But perhaps as important, the two games this weekend ended a grueling road stretch where the Skylights played away from Havre from Nov. 7 through Saturday afternoon.

Now the Skylights will turn their attention to a month-long homestand which starts with a game against the Dickinson State Blue Hawks at 5 p.m. on Thursday night in Havre.

**Simpson University 67, Skylights 66**

MSU-N — Laramie Schwenke 4-12 2-4 13, Nikki Tresch 6-11 1-2 17, Kylee Denham 2-4 1-2 5, Jordan Bruursema 2-6 6-6 11, Laci Keller 2-4 0-0 4, Taylor Cummings 1-2 3-6 5, Michah Kirkpatrick 1-1 0-0 3, Kelly Millager 4-5 0-0 8. Totals: 22-46 9-20 66.

Halftime: Simpson 37-29; 3-point field goals 9-20 (Schwenke 3, Tresch 4, Bruursema 1, Kirkpatrick 1); Rebounds 25 (Bruursema 5); Fouls: 21; Fouled out: None.

**Skylights 81, Holy Names 66**


Halftime: Northern 42-30; 3-point field goals: 6-14 (Schwenke 2, Tresch 2, Denham 2); Rebounds: 48 (Schwenke 9, Bruursema 9); Fouls 15; Fouled out: None.