Skylights thump Blue Hawks, again
George Ferguson
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The Montana State University-Northern women’s basketball team didn’t expect to beat the Dickinson State Blue Hawks by 30 points twice in season. And the Skylights didn’t.

Instead, Northern managed a mere 24-point cushion the second time around.

On Thursday night in Havre, the Skylights played their first home game in over a month, trouncing the Blue Hawks 70-56 at the MSU-Northern Fieldhouse. With the win, MSU-N earned a season sweep of DSU, which will join the Frontier Conference next season, as well as improved to 10-1 on the season.

The Skylights’ second straight blowout win over DSU came by way of some intense defense, and good all-around balance. Northern got 20 points and nine rebounds from junior Jordan Bruursema, while fellow post Kelly Millager added 11 points and seven boards.

And a good start was also critical. The Skylights jumped out to 21-8 lead via an early 15-2 run. Northern then closed the half with a Michah Kirkpatrick 3-pointer, which gave the Skylights a 13-0 run in the final six minutes and a commanding 42-22 lead at intermission.

DSU never recovered.

"I think the way we finished the first half was huge,” Northern head coach Chris Mouat said. "They (Blue Hawks) are a team who will never go away and they had closed the gap on us late in the half. But We were getting some great minutes from Kelly Millager and then Michah (Kirkpatrick) came in and gave us a big spark. The way we finished really allowed us to play with a nice little cushion in the second half.

"I thought we were a little sloppy in the second half, and we need to clean that up,” he added. “But some of that is also a credit to Dickinson. They never quit and they hit some big 3-point bombs right in our face. But our kids really played through some stuff tonight. We had one of our worst 3-point shooting nights of the year, and to still win going away like we did, that says a lot about how well we’re playing right now.”

DSU did close the gap back to eight points early in the second half, but the surge was short-lived. The Skylights quickly regained control and led by 13 points with 7:52 to play, and when Laramie Schwenke and Kylee Denham hot back-to-back three’s with under four minutes to go, the game was in hand for good.

“We didn’t shoot it as well as we would have liked,” Mouat said. “But we did hit some timely ones. Those shots by Laramie and Kylee were big shots for us.

“I thought the big keys were, we were balanced on offense, we gave another great defensive effort and we hit some timely shots every time they (Blue Hawks) seemed to be battling back. I thought Jordan
Bruursema had her best game in a while. She made some really big-time plays tonight. Overall, it was just an outstanding team win for us against a Dickinson team who will win a lot of games this season.”

Schwenke chipped in with 13 points and a game-high 12 rebounds. She also grabbed three steals, while Denham scored eight points and Nikki Tresch added seven. The Skylight defense only forced nine turnovers, but they held DSU to a season-low 32 percent from the field and a 9-of-25 performance from beyond the arc. Jessica Nieves led the Blue Hawks (3-7) with 16 points.

“The big thing is, I thought we got better again tonight,” Mouat said. “We fought through some stuff that wasn’t going our way and we were still able to win pretty comfortable. I’m proud of the kids for that. They overcame some stuff tonight and that was really nice to see.”

Northern is back at home next Thursday and Saturday for a pair of games in the annual Duck Inn Classic. The tourney will run Thursday-Saturday with Carroll, UGF, Minot State and Hope International visiting.

**Skylights 70, Dickinson State 56**

**DSU** — Jenna Cabello 0-0 0-0 0, Kylee Bittner 2-9 0-0 5, Jordyn Bender 5-17 0-0 13, Rebekah Larson 0-0 0-0 0, Yianna Nadeau 2-9 0-0 5, Kersten Jaramillo 0-1 0-0 0, Ashley Jelly 2-8 0-0 4, Jessica Nieves 6-13 0-0 16, Devan Koch 0-0 2-2 2, Mandy Mullock 4-11 1-2 9, Janae Moore 1-1 0-2 2. Totals 22-69 3-6 56.

**MSU-N** — Nikki Tresch 2-9 3-4 7, Laramie Schwenke 5-11 1-1 13, Kylee Denham 3-10 1-2 8, Rachelle Bennett 1-1 0-0 2, Taylor Cummings 0-1 0-0 0, Leah Olson 0-0 0-0 0, Jordan Bruuresma 7-13 5-6 20, Micah Kirkpatrick 2-5 0-1 5, Kelly Millager 5-9 1-2 11, Michaela Howe-Cobb 0-0 0-0 0, Laci Keller 2-3 0-0 4. Totals 27-62 11-16 70.

Halftime: Northern 42-22. 3-pt FG: DSU(N.D.) 9-25 (Bittner 1-6, Bender 3-6, Nadeau 1-3, Jelly 0-3, Nieves 4-5, Mullock 0-2), MSU-N 5-25 (Tresch 0-4, Schwenke 2-7, Denham 1-6, Cummings 0-1, Bruuresma 1-4, Kirkpatrick 1-3). Rebounds: DSU 42 (TEAM 12), MSU-N 46 (Schwenke 12). Fouls DSU 11, MSU-N 7. Fouled out: none.