By now, it’s a well-known fact, the Montana State University-Northern Skylights are good. After all, the Skylights are off to their best start ever under head coach Chris Mouat, and they’ve had good starts before.

But for all intents and purposes, Northern is back to square one and a new season begins tonight when the Skylights open Frontier Conference play at home against the University of Great Falls. Tonight’s game tips off at 6 at the MSU-Northern Fieldhouse.

Northern was picked to finish sixth in the Frontier, but all that has been thrown out the window because, from October to now, the Skylights have ripped off an impressive 13-1 record, including an eight-game win streak to start the season and wins over NCAA Division II foes Minot State and Minnesota-Moorhead.

As good as all that is though, Northern must now navigate the difficult Frontier, a league loaded with talented teams from top to bottom and it starts with the Argos tonight.

“We’re excited about what we’ve done so far,” Mouat said. “We’ve found ways to win games, we’ve fought through a lot of injuries and adversity and a tough road schedule and I feel like we’ve continued to improve through the last few months.

“But we also understand we have a long way to go,” he added. “Our league is very good. Really, you just don’t see a team in our league that can’t win on any given night, so we have to keep improving and keep staying the course because it’s going to be tough.”

And even against a UGF team which has only won four conference games in three years, the Skylights will be tested.

The Argos come to Havre with a 4-7 overall record, but they too have battled injury problems. And despite that record, second-year head coach Bill Himmelberg has plenty of firepower to work with.

UGF returns guards Kezia Ford (10 ppg) and Sara Sciascia (10 ppg), two outstanding and talented shooters. But the emergence of freshman Sydnee Burke, who’s averaging 11 points per game and shooting better than 39 percent from the 3-point-line has really bolstered the UGF backcourt.

Then there’s 6-3 transfer Kindra Jones. Jones has missed time due to injury, but when healthy she can dominate a game like few players in the Frontier can. She’s averaging 12 points and nine rebounds per outing and her athleticism makes her a handful for even the best and tallest defenders in the league. But she could be especially effective against a much smaller MSU-N lineup.

“Kindra Jones is a tremendous athlete,” Mouat said. “She’s not only big, she’s quick, she’s move really well without the ball and she can run the floor. She’s also a great rebounder, so we’ll have our hands full with her. And her presence really opens things up for their guards. And they have really good guards who can make open shots and get to the rim basket quickly. Defensively, they create a lot of matchup problems.”
The Argos are only scoring 66 points per game, but they can shoot it well. They are third in the Frontier from three, shooting 33 percent as a team. Meanwhile, the Skylights lead the Frontier defensively to start the season. Northern has been downright stingy, especially in going unbeaten at home. MSU-N gives up just 53 points per game, and allows teams to shoot 35 percent from the floor.

Offensively, the Skylights are led by the veteran trio of Nikki Tresch (16 ppg), Laramie Schwenke (15 ppg) and Jordan Bruursema (14 ppg). Schwenke is also averaging a team-high seven rebounds and four assists while Bruursema is averaging five boards per game. All three will also be key on defense tonight, but with Jones being such a handful, Burrusema will need help in the post from the likes of Kelly Millager and Laci Keller, both of whom have played well as late. Kylee Denham is also one of Northern’s best lockdown defenders.

“We have to play much better than we did against Mount Royal, on both ends,” Mouat said. “We’ve hung our hat on defense this season and we’ll need that effort against UGF because they are very dangerous.

“Our whole league is dangerous,” he added. “We know that if you don’t play your best each night in this league, you’re going to get beat. That’s the bottom line. So we have to come out ready to play, we have to get off to a good start on both ends of the floor and we have to maintain that. We need to rebound well and make free throws. Those things are going to be critical to our success.”

Tonight’s Frontier opener between the Skylights and Argos gets underway at 6 at the MSU-Northern Fieldhouse. The game can be heard locally on 92.5 KPQX FM and streamed live at www.msun.edu/athletics.

**MSU-Northern vs UGF**
Tonight at 6 p.m.
Havre

Radio: 92.5 KPQX FM

Streaming: www.msun.edu/athletics

Twitter: www.twitter/havredaily

**Skylights Probably Starters**
G Laramie Schwenke, 5-8, Sr., 15 ppg
G Nikki Tresch, 5-5, Jr., 16 ppg
G Kylee Denham, 5-8, Jr., 9 ppg
F Kelly Millager, 6-1, Jr., 5 rpg
F Jordan Bruursema, 6-0, Jr., 14 ppg