Skylights rebound in Helena
George Ferguson
Friday, January 20th, 2012

The Montana State University-Northern women’s basketball team was in two dramatic games just a week ago, both resulting in home losses.

The Skylights found themselves in another tight one Thursday night in Helena, only Northern reversed roles. MSU-N came back from a halftime deficit and another tough shooting night to upend Carroll College 55-50 in Helena Thursday night. The win pushed Northern to 2-2 in Frontier Conference play and returned the Skylights to a good feeling after last weekend’s setback at home.

“I’m just very, very proud of our kids tonight,” Northern head coach Chris Mouat said. “Carroll took the fight to us tonight. They played very well, and we did not for about 30 minutes. But we responded well tonight and we found a way to pull ahead and win at the end. No matter how it looked out there, I’m just really proud of our kids for finding a way shake off last weekend and move forward.”

For a good portion of Thursday night’s game at the Carroll P.E. Center, it didn’t look like the Skylights were moving forward at all. The Saints came in to the game winless in Frontier play, but they got a big spark early from Jeni Guertin and some timely baskets by Jordan Bagley. Carroll led by as many as six in the first half, but a Jordan Bruursema 3-pointer pulled Northern closer, and the Skylights trailed by a manageable 21-16 margin at intermission.

Still, the shooting woes that have played Northern in recent weeks were still lingering in the first half. The Skylights shot just 36 percent from the field in the first 20 minutes, and if it wasn’t for big 3-pointers by Bruursema and Laramie Schwenke, MSU-N may have been down more at the break.

“We did not play well tonight, especially in the first half,” Mouat said. “We continued to miss layups and wide open looks at the basket and that’s something that just cannot continue. But also credit Carroll’s defense. They came in ready for us and they defended us well. And we were turning the ball over way too much.”

The Saints stayed on top deep into the second half, but a putback basket by Laci Keller with six minutes to go gave Northern a lead the Skylights would dauntingly hang on to the rest of the way. MSU-N made two big baskets in the final minute to grab a cushion and the Saints didn’t have a last-second comeback in them. For Northern, it was the second straight season in which it’s beaten Carroll on the Saints’ home floor.

“It’s been this way for much of the season,” Mouat said. “We’ve been in some real tight games, so we’ve been down this road before and our kids play with a lot of poise in those situations. They did that again tonight, and fortunately we found enough offense at the end to push through and get the job done.”

Bruursema came up big for Northern I both halves, scoring a total of 15 points, while grabbing four rebounds. Keller scored 10 points and pulled down five rebounds off the bench, while Schwenke scored 10 and Kylee Denham added nine, including two trey’s. Northern shot 50 percent from three and held the Saints to just 50 points as the Skylights continue to lead the Frontier in scoring defense.

Carroll (0-4, 7-10) was led by Guertin’s 13 points and six rebounds.

“Laci Keller had a huge game for us tonight,” Mouat said. “She’s really starting to get healthy and play well. I think a lot of kids stepped up big for us when we really needed it.”
“Once again, we have some things we have to clean up,” he added. “The turnovers and missed layups are really hurting us. But this is a win on the road against a team who played really well, probably better than us tonight. So we’ll take this and be very excited about it, and hopefully we’ll continue to move forward from here.”

The Skylights remain on the road for one more game this weekend. Northern (2-2, 15-3) will travel to Billings Saturday to face the Rocky Mountain College Battlin’ Bears (2-2, 13-6), who beat the University of Great Falls 61-48 Thursday night. The game between RMC and Northern will tip off at 5:30 p.m. Saturday and can be heard locally on 92.5 KPQX FM. It can also be streamed live at www.msun.edu/athletics. Northern is home to face Westminster and Lewis-Clark State next Friday and Saturday.

**Skylights 55, Carroll 50**

**MSU-N** — Jordan Bruuresma 7-13 0-0 15, Kelly Millager 1-4 0-0 2, Laramie Schwenke 2-8 5-6 10, Nikki Tresch 2-10 0-0 6, Kylee Denham 3-6 1-1 9, Rachelle Bennett 1-2 0-0 3, Taylor Cummings 0-1 0-0 0, Michaela Howe-Cobb 0-0 0-0 0, Laci Keller 5-6 0-0 10. Totals 21-50 6-7 55.

**CC** — Amy Allen 2-2 0-0 4, Jeni Guertin 4-14 6-9 14, Torrie Cahill 1-5 2-2 4, Kalee Junkermier 4-7 0-0 10, Jill Jagelski 2-4 0-0 4, Allison Sullivan 0-0 0-0 0, Jackie Mee 1-3 0-2 2, Jackie Gebhardt 0-0 0-0 0, Bailey Snelling 1-7 0-0 2, Jordan Bagley 4-5 2-2 10. Totals 19-47 10-15 50.