

## UGF dangerous to Northern women

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The Montana State University-Northern women's basketball team is coming off a roller coaster of a weekend. The only thing is, the Skylights have been on this ride before and they know how to deal with it.

Northern pulled off a stunning upset of then No. 6 Lewis-Clark State last Friday night in Havre, only to have that momentum stopped dead in its tracks by Westminster College last Saturday night.

"I think we've had a good week of practice," MSU-N head coach Chris Mouat said. "Our kids understand that we have to be at our best against UGF or we'll get beat. It's really that simple. We have to put the ball in the basket, and we can't afford to go long stretches without scoring like we did at the end of the Westminster game.

"We've seen improvements throughout this week of practice," he added.

"And I think we're due for a good game shooting the basketball. And that's the bottom line, we have to make shots on Saturday night."

And Northern (3-4, 16-5) is capable of making shots. After all, the Skylights lead the NAIA in 3-point shooting at 29 percent as a team. Laramie Schwenke, who averages 15 points and five rebounds per game, leads the Frontier and is 14th in the NAIA in 3-point shooting at 41 percent. Nikki Tresch, Jordan Bruursema and Kylee Denham can also hit from beyond the arc, and that's what the Skylights are hoping for against the Argos, who they beat 55-47 back on Jan. 7 in Havre.

But making shots isn't the only priority in Great Falls. Mouat says the Skylights not only need to bring their trademark defense, but they need to rebound at a high level. MSU-N is out-sized almost every night, but will be particularly challenged against the Argos (1-6, 7-13), who start 6-3 Kindra Jones and 6-2 Lindsey Abramson on the front line. Northern is second-to-last in the Frontier in rebounding margin, but in the Skylights' win over LCSC, they won the battle of the boards. MSU-N also has the top-rated defense in the Frontier, as the Skylights are allowing just 54 points per game.

"We have to be on our toes defensively," Mouat said. "They (Argos) are very dangerous, especially on the offensive boards. They are not only big up front, but their guards crash the boards really hard and they can really hurt you. We have to play good defense and limit them to one shot. Being at our best rebounding the ball is always a focus for us, but it is particularly big against Great Falls."

The Argos may have just one conference win on their resume', but they are as dangerous a team offensively as there is in the Frontier. Kezia Ford is a dynamic scorer who can go inside, but can also shoot, while Sarah Sciascia can score early and score often. Sciascia scored 12 points, all in the second half against the Skylights last month. Ford leads the Argos in scoring at 11 points per game, while point guard Sydney Burke, who's a deadly 3-point shooter averages 10. Jones adds 10 points and seven rebounds per game, while she's among the NAIA leaders in blocked shots. Sciascia averages nine points as does Abramson.

And make no mistake, despite UGF's record, this game is big for the Skylights. Northern made progress last week with the win over LCSC and the Skylights want to make sure they don't take a step back, despite the challenge of winning on the road.



*MSU-Northern's Jordan Bruursema reverses a layup during a Frontier Conference women's game last month against UGF. Saturday night, the Skylights will try to sweep the Argos when they meet in Great Falls.*

"They (Argos) gave us all we could handle last time we played them," Mouat said. "We did a great job in building a 13-point lead and not only did they cut into that, they took the lead on us in the second half. They have a lot of firepower and they're not a good rebounding team, they are a great rebounding team in my opinion.

"So we have our hands full," he added. "They are a dangerous team who plays fast and when their scorers get going, they are really tough to beat. Our kids have worked hard this week to get ready, and they know this is a tough road game for us."

The Skylights and UGF will tip off at 5 p.m. Saturday in Great Falls. The start time was moved up so that the team could attend a ceremony in Belt Saturday night to honor MSU-N freshman point guard Taylor Cummings' father, who passes away this past summer. Saturday night's game between the Skylights and Argos can be heard locally on 92.5 KPOX FM and streamed live on the internet at [www.msun.edu/athletics](http://www.msun.edu/athletics).