Skylights turn the tables on Tech
MSU-N women earn a hard-fought, road split with Tech, Western
George Ferguson
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The Montana State University-Northern women’s basketball team just keeps getting up after its been knocked down.

And this weekend on the road was no different. The Skylights suffered a tough, 80-72 loss to UM-Western Friday night in Dillon, only to rebound with a nail biting 42-41 win over Montana Tech Saturday night in Butte.

The road split kept Northern in fourth place in the Frontier Conference with a 5-5 record. The Skylights also improved to 18-6 overall.

Saturday night’s game was a rematch of a controversial tilt last month in Havre, which the Orediggers won by one point. Northern returned the favor in Butte. In a seesaw affair, in which neither team could really build any momentum after Northern opened the game on a 17-6 run.

The Skylights led 21-20 at the half as Tech closed the first 20 minutes by outscoring MSU-N 14-4. The two teams then went back and forth before a wild finish. MSU-N led by four points with under a minute to go, but Tech closed the gap on a Tabitha Tomlinson 3-pointer. The Orediggers than got a defensive stop, and had the ball for a game-winning attempt. But they never actually got a shot off, and though many players thought a foul had been called with no time left, there was no such call and the Skylights escaped with a win which was eerily similar to how things unfolded the last time the two teams met in Havre.

"This was a big win for us and our defense bailed us out of a terrible shooting night," Northern head coach Chris Mouat said. "Jordan (Bruursema) stepped up and hit big shots, and Laci’s play in the paint down the stretch were huge for us. This was simply a game where no shots came easy for either team. We were very tired from Friday night and our effort was good."

Jordan Bruursema was the catalyst for the Skylights, scoring 17 points and hitting three three’s, while Kylee Denham yanked down 13 rebounds to help the Skylights earn a season split with Tech. Laci Keller helped out with eight points.

Friday night’s game in Dillon was also similar to the first time Northern and Western met last month in Havre. The Skylights and Bulldogs played a furious first 20 minutes with Northern holding a 41-40 halftime lead. But Western’s offense kept exploding in the second half as the Bulldogs put up 80 points on the Frontier’s top-rated defense for the second time this season.

Northern held its own offensively too, but the Skylights couldn’t quite catch Western in the closing seconds and the Bulldogs made a host of free throws int he final seconds to widen the margin.

Laramie Schwenke scored 25 points and hit four three’s for the Skylights. Bruursema scored 16 and Nikki Tresch added 15 points and three trey’s.

"We had a chance with 22 seconds and down two but didn’t come up with the board," Mouat said. "They (Bulldogs) hit free throws down the stretch to gap us. Laramie had a huge all-around performance, but we got good contributions from a lot of different players. We simply failed to get enough stops defensively and we really hurt ourselves with missed layups. They beat us in transition far too often. Despite not playing our best I am proud of the effort our team gave. We played hard and executed very well on offense, but we have to finish better."
The Skylights will be back at home for their final two regular season games of the year this weekend. MSU-N host Rocky Mountain College on Friday night, then celebrates senior night with a special 5:30 p.m. start time against Carroll College on Saturday.

**UM-Western 80, Skylights 72**

**MSU-N** — Laramie Schwenke 9-22 3-3 25, Jordan Bruuresma 7-15 0-0 16, Kylee Denham 1-5 0-0 2, Laci Keller 2-3 2-2 6, Kelly Millager 0-3 0-0 0, Taylor Cummings 0-1 0-0 0, Rachelle Bennett 2-2 4-4 8, Nikki Tresch 6-16 0-0 15. Totals 27-67 9-9 72.

**UM-W** — Sammi Bignell 10-14 2-4 27, Roxy Thurman 0-2 0-0 0, Kassi Kerbs 0-3 0-0 0, Jenna Banks 0-0 1-2 1, Morgen Thacker 0-3 1-2 1, Brittney Leibenguth 0-1 0-0 0, Alecia Wilson 4-8 0-3 8, Nicole Tams 5-7 2-4 14, Kaci Matthies 0-0 0-0 0, Hayley Pettit 6-10 9-10 21, Kelsey Callaghan 3-4 0-1 8, Taylor Kanthack 0-2 0-0 0. Totals 28-54 15-26 80.


**Skylights 42, Montana Tech 41**

**MSU-N** — Laramie Schwenke 2-16 3-4 7, Nikki Tresch 1-4 1-2 4, Kylee Denham 2-10 0-2 4, Taylor Cummings 0-1 0-0 0, Jordan Bruursema 6-12 2-2 17, Kelly Millager 1-3 0-0 2, Lacie Keller 3-7 2-2 8. Totals 15-56 8-12 42.

**MT** — Bryn Hasquet 0-2 0-0 0, Dannielle Devenny 2-4 1-2 5, Brianne McClafferty 3-5 0-0 7, Kelsey DeWit 5-11 0-0 10, Mandy Machinal 2-8 4-4 8, Tabitha Tomlinson 4-14 0-0 10, Erica Jenkins 0-2 1-2 1, Shaye Murphy 0-0 0-0 0, Laini Kalumbi 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 16-46 6-8 40.