Pronghorns steal one from Skylights
George Ferguson
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After two impressive wins on the road, the Montana State University-Northern women’s basketball team had a lengthy break on the schedule.

And when that break was over, the Skylights found themselves on the other side of the coin. On Friday night at the Armory Gymnasium, a talented and tall University of Lethbridge squad spoiled MSU-N’s home opener by beating the Skylights 66-61.

With the loss, Northern fell to 2-1 on the young season, and will now have to wait nearly two more weeks until it gets a chance at redemption.

“We found out tonight we still have a lot of growing up to do,” Northern head coach Chris Mouat said. “We saw we have to be better in so many areas. At times, we were better tonight, but at other times we were far from it.”

And the times when Northern wasn’t, the Pronghorns took advantage.

The Skylights opened the game with two early 3-pointers from Nikki Tresch, and things looked good. But MSU-N went on to miss its next 12 attempts from beyond the arc, and at one point in the first half, the Skylights went nearly eight minutes without making a field goal.

Meanwhile, the Pronghorns ripped off a 13-2 run to turn a 16-7 Northern lead into a 20-18 MSU-N deficit. And Lethbridge kept on playing well as guard Ali Cameron was making shots from the outside, while 6-1 forwards Kim Veldman and Erin Skippon took control of the paint.

Lethbridge led 33-27 at halftime, but MSU-N cut the lead to two points on back-to-back buckets by Tresch and Jordan Bruursema at the start of the second half. From there however, the Pronghorns dominated. Lethbridge went on a 10-0 run to lead by double digits, while the Skylights went cold for another seven-minute stretch.

“We didn’t make shots,” Mouat said. “And we missed wide open looks, at three’s, at layups and in transition. And we missed key free throws. We just didn’t shoot it well and we have to in order to beat a solid team like Lethbridge.

“And give Lethbridge all the credit in the world,” he added. “They came in here and out-played us. They were more aggressive, they were more physical, they out-rebounded us and they shot it better than us. They played better than we did tonight and they deserved to win.”
Though that was all true, the Skylights had their chances down the stretch.

MSU-N trailed 53-44 with seven minutes to go, but twice the Skylights whittled the lead down to a manageable five points. Kassie Barta nailed a key 3-pointer, then Kylee Denham’s driving layup got MSU-N to within five points with just under four minutes to play. However, missed free throws and a couple of key turnovers cost the Skylights a chance to get closer, and even when Bruursema nailed a three to pull Northern back to within five with 1:14 to go, Lethbridge responded by going back in front. Barta and Tresch both made three’s in the final minute, but by then it was too-little-too-late.

“We just didn’t respond to them taking it to us,” Mouat said. “We have to be better than that and I think we will be. We will learn a lot of from this game. There’s a lot to look in the mirror at and we’ll get better from this.”

Tresch was the only Skylight in double figures as she scored 20 points and hit four three’s. As a team, MSU-N shot just 31 percent from the floor and missed 22 three’s. Barta gave MSU-N eight points off the bench, while Bruursema and Denham each scored seven. But none of it was enough to offset Cameron’s game-high 27 points or the 13-point, 11-rebound double-double from Veldman. Skippon also scored 16 for the Horns, who also have a win over UGF this season.

The Skylights (2-1) will now have another extended break before returning to the Armory Gymnasium to take on Culver-Stockton on Nov. 9.

**Lethbridge 66, Skylights 61**

**UL** – Stephanie Inman 3-6 0-0 7, Erin Skippon 7-15 2-2 16, Kim Veldman 5-10 3-3 13, Ali Cameron 10-14 4-6 27, Katlyn Olson 1-3 1-4 3. Totals: 26-49 10-15 66.

**MSU-N** – Jordan Bruursema 1-10 4-4 7, Laci Keller 2-6 2-2 6, Nikki tresh 8-20 0-0 20, Taylor Cummings 1-5 0-0 2, Kylee Denham 3-11 1-3 7, Kassie Barta 3-6 0-0 8, Kacie McKeon 1-4 2-2 4, Rachelle Bennett 1-5 1-4 1, Maurisha McKissic 1-1 0-0 2, Michaela Howe-Cobb 1-2 0-0 2. Totals: 22-70 10-15 61.

**Halftime**: Lethbridge 33-27. 3-point field goals: MSU-N 7-29 (Bruursema 1, Tresch 4, Barta 2), UL 4-8 (Cameron 3, Inman 1), Rebounds: MSU-N 32 (Keller 9), UL 38 (Veldman 11, Olsen 10), Fouls: MSU-N 16, UL 13, Fouled out: Cummings.