If the Montana State University-Northern women’s basketball team was road weary after last weekend’s foray west to Washington and Oregon, the Skylights sure didn’t show it Thursday night.

MSU-N put up its highest point total of the season, as well as another staunch defensive effort in defeating Walla Walla University 89-30 in the first day of the Duck Inn Holiday Classic at the Armory Gymnasium.

The Skylights used a 15-2 run in the first half, as well as an 11-for-28 performance from the 3-point-line to overwhelm the Wolves on their way to the easy victory. Northern also shot a stellar 14-for-16 from the free-throw-line, and the Skylight defense forced Walla Walla into 18 turnovers.

“I’m proud of our kids for coming out and really playing hard, especially with this game coming so soon after a really tough road trip,” Northern head coach Chris Mouat said. “I thought we shared the ball extremely well tonight and got a lot of good looks at the basket, both outside and in the paint.

“Walla Walla played very hard,” he continued. “We knew they would, and they run a lot of really good stuff. I thought they were very well prepared tonight. I just think we did a really nice job of moving the ball around, and I also thought we executed really well on defense.”

The Skylights especially clamped down on defense early on.

MSU-N held the Wolves to just two field goals in the first nine minutes of the contest, and overall, Walla Walla shot just 23 percent from the field in the first half. Meanwhile, Nikki Tresch, Jordan Bruursema and Kassie Barta all drilled threes which helped spur Northern on to a commanding 23-7 lead with six minutes left in the half. Bruursema and Barta added a pair of triples just before half, helping the Skylights take a 39-16 lead into intermission.

“I didn’t particularly like how we started the game offensively,” Mouat said. “We were a little sloppy with the ball, and we just weren’t executing. We also didn’t do a very good job on the boards in the first half, and Walla Walla deserves a lot of credit for that, because they were fighting hard for rebounds and they seemed to be making all the hustle plays.

“But we did execute offensively later on in the half, and those threes right before halftime really gave us a little extra burst,” he added. “And then, by-in-large, I thought we played extremely well on both ends of the floor in the second half.”

And as Northern opened up an even bigger lead as the second stanza went on, Mouat’s bench got into the act. The Skylights led by as many as 60 points in the second frame, and saw good minutes from the likes of Maurisha McKissic, Kacie McKeon, Leah Olson, Macey Cox and Michaela Howe-Cobb. Olson scored three baskets in the interior, while Cox nailed two treys. McKeon added seven points off the bench and Howe-Cobb scored four points.
“Our bench showed they were ready to play tonight,” Mouat said. “And not only did they all get to play, everybody stepped up and contributed. That was nice to see, because we’re going to need our bench to be effective as we get into conference play. And I thought they all did a great job tonight.”

The Skylights finished the game shooting 56 percent from the field, while out-rebounding Walla Walla 47-28. As a team, the Skylights had 21 assists to just 10 turnovers, with Taylor Cummings leading the way with eight dimes.

In the score column, MSU-N was balanced. Tresch led the way with 16 points and three bombs, while Bruursema tallied a double-double with 11 points and 10 boards. Barta made two treys to add a solid 11 points off the bench, while Laci Keller totaled 10 points and sophomore Rachelle Bennett had another solid game starting in place of the injured Kylee Denham. Bennett had nine points, four rebounds and three assists.

Walla Walla, which shot just 21 percent for the game, and made only three shots from beyond the arc, got a team-high seven points from Dani Carlman.

The win over the Wolves pushed Northern to 6-4 on the season, and the Skylights will get another shot at Walla Walla Saturday night.

“We’ve still got a lot to work on, and we know Walla Walla will come back and be ready to play Saturday,” Mouat said. “But I was really pleased with how we played tonight. We wanted to come out and play as complete a game as we could, and for the most part, we did that tonight. So we’ll take the positives from this game, be glad for the win and get ready for the next one.”

Walla Walla will play again this afternoon when the Wolves take on Rocky Mountain College at 2:30 at the Armory Gymnasium. The Skylights and Wolves will close out the Duck Inn Holiday Classic with a rematch Saturday at 6 p.m.

**A Holiday Classic**

**Skylights 89, Walla Walla 30**

**WWU** — Lauren Pernu 1-3 0-0 2, Nicolette Neel 1-4 0-0 3, Dani Carlmen 3-13 1-1 7, Johanna Uribe 0-3 3-4 3, Michelle Warner 1-9 0-0 2, Abbey Manzano 2-13 0-0 5, Rebekah Gaines 1-2 0-0 3, Gieselle Schmitz 2-5 1-2 5. Totals: 11-52 5-8 30.

**MSU-N** — Jordan Bruursema 4-9 2-2 11, Lci Keller 4-7 1-1 10, Nikki Tresch 6-11 1-2 16, Rachelle Bennett 3-7 2-2 9, Taylor Cummings 1-3 2-2 4, Kassie Barta 4-6 1-1 11, Kacie McKeon 2-5 2-2 7, Leah Olson 3-5 0-0 6, Macey Cox 2-4 0-0 6, Maurisha McKissic 1-4 3-4 5, Michaela Howe-Cobb 2-3 0-0 4. Totals: 32-64 14-16 89.

Halftime: Northern 39-16. 3-pointers: MSU-N 11-28 (Bruursema 1, Keller 1, Tresch 3, Bennett 1, Barta 2, McKeon 1, Cox 2), WWU 3-10 (Carlman 1, Manzano 1, Gaines 1). Rebounds: MSU-N 47 (Bruursema 10), WWU 28 (Uribe 5, Schmitz 5). Fouls: MSU-N 11, WWU 14. Fouled out: None.