Skylights travel to California
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The holiday break is over, and a break from tough competition for the Montana State University-Northern women's basketball team is over too.

The Skylights (7-4) will be on the road for two tough games this weekend, starting with a Friday afternoon affair against 14th-ranked The Master's College in Santa Clarita, Calif. Northern will also take on Hope International University Saturday afternoon in Santa Clarita, which will wrap up non-conference play.

MSU-N last took the floor Dec. 15 when the Skylights throttled Walla Walla College for the second time in three days. So with some rest in tow, Northern now turns its attention to a much more difficult pair of foes.

“These next games are going to be especially difficult,” MSU-N head coach Chris Mouat said. “The Master’s is a top-ten caliber team and will be a huge challenge for us. And Hope international is much-improved from when we saw them last. So this trip is going to be a real test for us.”

The Skylights are have history with both opponents this weekend. The Master’s is the team which ended Northern’s dream run at the 2005 NAIA national tournament, while MSU-N has hosted Hope International in Havre before.

And with just these two games left before Frontier Conference play kicks into high gear next week, the Skylights will certainly use these games as a final tune-up for the league play which lies ahead.

Northern hope to be one hundred percent this weekend, after not having Kylee Denham for the last four games because of ankle injury. The Skylights are led by Nikki Tresch, who’s averaging 16 points per outing, while Jordan Bruursema has come on strong of late, averaging 13 points and seven rebounds. Laci Keller is back to full strength as well, and MSU-N’s bench is playing the best it’s played all season.

But the Skylights will have to play even better if they want to contend with The Master’s on Friday. The Mustangs just trounced a much-improved UGF team by 40 points earlier this month, and they also have a win over the Frontier’s top team, Westminster College last month. The Mustangs (10-0) are led by Theresa Brown and Jaquelyn Marshall, but they also have seven other players who average between seven and nine points per game.

Things won’t get much easier for the Skylights on Saturday. Hope International is 7-6 on the season, and has already played a very tough schedule.

But for as difficult a road trip as this weekend will be for the Skylights, Mouat said it’s just what his team needs with Frontier play less than a week away.

“These games, especially against The Master’s will be a great test for us,” Mouat said. “They (Mustangs) are as good as any team we’ll face in our league and they’ve already beaten some of the best teams in
our league. And Hope International will play us tough too. So we’re up against a lot on this trip, but it will certainly make us better.”

The Skylights will take on The Master’s College at 2 p.m. on Friday, and Hope International at 12 p.m. Saturday in Santa Clarita, Calif. Northern will re-open league play next Thursday at home against Dickinson State University.