Bench play has been big for the Montana State University-Northern women’s basketball team this season. And the Skylights got that in the second half of their dominating performance over the Montana Tech Orediggers Friday night at the Armory Gymnasium.

Trailing 22-15 at halftime, Northern stormed back to beat the Orediggers 54-41, and a big reason why was a Butte-tough freshman who was able to stick it to her hometown.

Kacie McKeon, a former Class A All-State standout from Butte Central, came in and drilled two critical 3-pointers in the second half against Tech, including the shot which put the Skylights ahead for good. In all, McKeon scored eight points in a three-minute stretch, helping MSU-N get its offense on track for good I what turned out to be a much-needed win.

“It feels great to come in and hit some shots to help the team,” McKeon said. “It always feels good to contribute off the bench, and that’s what we needed at that point tonight.”

McKeon is playing as a true freshman, which is a compliment to her basketball abilities. And though she’s had big games already this season, her presence, and timely shooting certainly lifted the Skylights to a win they needed badly.

“Kacie has played well this season, she’s been a spark for us off the bench in a lot of different games,” Mouat said. “And it was nice to see her come in and do what she did tonight. She made a really big shot to give us the lead, and she wasn’t just good on offense, she gave us some great minutes on defense too. I was really happy for her. She had a great game and our entire bench gave us a big lift tonight.”

Warriors owed em’ one

In both the men’s and women’s games Saturday night at the Armory Gymnasium, the Lewis-Clark State Warriors were certainly due.

On the women’s side, not only did the Skylights knock off the nationally-ranked Warriors at home just last season, but the last time the two went to overtime, Northern prevailed in a wild one. That was in 2009 when the Skylights beat the highly-ranked Warriors 93-89 in the Armory. But on Saturday night, it was LCSC’s turn. The Warriors bit big shot after big shot, as did Northern, but LCSC did just enough to escape Havre with a victory.

“We went blow-for-blow tonight,” Northern head coach Chris Mouat said. “I am really proud of our kids and the effort they gave the entire game. LC played a great game and gave great effort too. We just came up a little short.”
Meanwhile, the LCSC men hadn’t won in the Armory in its last six trips to Havre, dating all the way back to the 2007 season. But on Saturday night, the Warriors took one for the Lights and they did it in commanding fashion.

Not only did the Warriors break away from the Lights in the final 10 minutes, but they rubbed it in MSU-N’s face a little too when LC star forward P.J. Bolte decided to throw down a monstrous dunk with under :30 left and the game well in hand.

Interestingly, under the new-look Frontier Conference schedule, the Lights will get a chance to exact some revenge quickly. MSU-N is in Lewiston, Idaho to take on the Warriors this Saturday.

**What might have been**

It would be worth noting that the Skylights may have not been given one last chance in Saturday night’s double-overtime loss to LC State.

As Kylee Denham heaved a final desperation shot that was not to be, Northern junior Laci Keller was plowed over by a Warrior running down the floor. Time expired and no foul was called, but it certainly looked like an obvious foul from most vantage points.

Interestingly enough, Keller and Northern were on the other end of that spectrum not long ago as she was called for a foul in much the same manner in a game against Montana Tech in Havre. The foul gave the Orediggers two free throws and the win, and it’s too bad the Skylights weren’t given at least that same chance Saturday night.

**Carrying the load**

Overshadowed in Northern’s NAIA Game of the Week loss to LC State Saturday night was the performance of junior guard Roshawn West.

The Lights were out of synch for much of the night offensively, and LC’s defense had plenty to do with that. But West was anything but out of synch. Not only did he score a career-high 27 points, but he was efficient, going 11-of-18 from the floor and 3-for-6 from three. West also had three steals and dished out a pair of assists while playing a heavy 34 minutes in Saturday night’s loss.