Skylights earn a historic win at Lewis-Clark State
MSU-Northern women pay back Warriors in Lewiston
George Ferguson
Sunday, January 27th, 2013

After losing to the Lewis-Clark State Warriors in double-overtime on Jan. 19 in Havre, the Montana State University-Northern women’s basketball team marched into LCSC’s home gym on Saturday night and got their revenge. The Skylights jumped all over the Warriors in the first half and went on to win 60-50.

The Frontier Conference road win completed a huge sweep for the Skylights, who also beat Great Falls last Thursday night, as they improved to 5-4 in league play. Saturday night’s victory was also the first in Lewiston, Idaho by a Skylights’ team since Northern head coach Chris Mouat took over eight years ago.

“Just really proud of them,” Mouat said. “This is a very tough trip. We were coming off a really tough game in Great Falls, and after the way we lost to them (Warriors) last week, we had to overcome a lot. But our kids were very focused tonight and very prepared for this game, and I’m really proud of them for stepping up and finding a way to get it done against a really good team, who has been awfully tough to beat on their home floor over the years.”

After suffering a heartbreaking loss to the Warriors in the Armory Gymnasium just seven days earlier, the Skylights came out firing on all cylinders Saturday night. Northern buried the Warriors in the first 20 minutes, thanks in large part to the heady play of senior Jordan Bruursema, as well as the outside shooting of Nikki Tresch and sophomore Rachelle Bennett, who started in place of the injured Kylee Denham. MSU-N also dominated on the boards from start-to-finish, and that was a big difference between Saturday night’s commanding 36-13 halftime lead, and last weekend’s bitter loss.

“We got off to a great start and that was huge for us,” Mouat said. “We made shots and that’s always big. But we made shots right away and we just continued to play well as the first half went on. I just thought we came out really focused and determined on both ends of the floor, and we were able to build a really nice lead.

“Rachelle Bennett did a great job of stepping in for Kylee (Denham),” he added. “It was her first start in a while and she played great. She really did a nice job and gave us a big lift in the first half.”

Although the Warriors made a late run at the Skylights in the second half, Northern was never going to let a critical road victory get away. The Skylights wound up out-rebounding the Warriors 42-31, and they held LC State to just 31 percent shooting for the game, as well as just three made 3-pointers. The Skylights’ trademark defense also did a number on LCSC’s two elite scorers. Guards Annie Kane and Tanis Fuller combined for just 11 points on the night.

“We rebounded and we defended well for all 40 minutes,” Mouat said. “That was big because if you do those two things against them (Warriors), you’re going to give yourself a chance. And we did those two things exceptionally well tonight.

“But the bottom line is, we made shots,” he added. “We shot the ball well, and we got great help from our bench again. We just got a great all-around effort offensively, and everybody stepped up big tonight.”
Bruursema paced the Skylights with a double-double that included a game-high 17 points and 11 rebounds. She also nailed two of Northern’s nine three’s, while Tresch hit four trey’s and scored 16 points. Bennett added eight points and Laci Keller scored seven. LCSC (3-6, 6-17) got 15 points from 6-2 center Ornela Bacchini. She scored 28 in Havre last week.

And now, with back-to-back road wins, the Skylights are right back in the thick of the Frontier race. Northern is alone in fourth place, but the Skylights are only a game behind Montana Tech and two behind second-place Carroll heading into Friday’s rematch with UGF at the Armory Gymnasium.

“The start really propelled us tonight, and I’m just so proud of the kids for being focused and ready to go,” Mouat said. “This was one we felt we really needed to steal on the road and we were able to do it. So I’m just really proud of the kids for that.”

Northern will host UGF Friday night at 6 p.m. The Skylights then head back on the road for games at Montana Tech Feb. 8 and Carroll Feb. 9.

Skylights 60, LC State 50

**MSU-N** – Kassie Barta 1-5 0-0 2, Kacie McKeon 1-1 0-0 3, Nikki Tresch 5-12 2-4 16, Rachelle Bennett 3-5 1-1 8, Taylor Cummings 2-7 0-0 5, Jordan Bruursema 6-15 3-4 17, Maurisha McKissic 1-1 0-1 2, Laci Keller 3-5 1-2 7. Totals: 22-51 7-12 60.

**LCSC** – Shelby Barnes 3-6 4-5 10, Ornela Bacchini 7-12 1-1 15, Annie Kane 2-14 2-2 7, Hannah Byerly 0-1 0-0 0, Loree Hill 2-4 0-0 5, Kelli Rice 2-5 2-3 7, Tanis Fuller 1-8 2-6 4, Laurenna Plourd 1-8 2-6 4, McKenzie Heaslet 0-3 0-0 0. Totals: 18-57 11-17 50.

Halftime: Northern 36-13. 3-pointers: MSU-N 9-19 (Tresch 4, Bennett 1, Cummings 1, Bruursema 2), LCSC 3-9 (Kane 1, Rice 1, Hill 1). Rebounds: MSU-N 42 (Bruursema 11), LCSC 31 (Barnes 5). Fouls: MSU-N 18, LCSC 12. Fouled out: None.