Skylights brace for big road games
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Two games, two big games is all that stands between the Montana State University-Northern women’s basketball team and the postseason. But for the Skylights to secure a Frontier Conference to-four seed in the upcoming playoffs, they’ll have to do it on the road.

MSU-N (7-7, 15-11) is currently alone in fourth place in the Frontier standings, which means if the Skylights stay there following tonight’s game at Rocky Mountain College and Saturday’s regular season finale at Dickinson State, they’ll host a Frontier quarterfinal game next week in Havre. The worst Northern could do is slip to sixth, which would still put them in the playoffs.

On the final weekend of the season, the Skylights will play a pair of teams they swept back in January. Northern beat RMC (5-9, 8-16) 64-46 and DSU (2-10, 7-19) in Havre, but both teams have played better since.

Rocky is fighting tooth and nail for a playoff berth and will certainly give the Skylights all they can handle tonight. The Bears are led by guard Brittany Kumm, who averages 11 points per game and forward Brittany Meyers, who averages 10.

“Rocky is a very, very quick team on the perimeter,” Northern head coach Chris Mouat said. “And, they have one of the top three-point shooters in the conference in Brittany Kumm. They are a huge challenge to guard, especially in Billings where they play very well. We will definitely focus on taking care of the basketball, and doing a good job on the boards with them.”

Dickinson State has had its struggles this season, but the Blue Hawks won’t be a pushover, especially after giving the Skylights a tough game in Havre last month. The Blue Hawks are led by the talented Janae Moore, while posts Jess Byegate and Mariah Duran also score double figures.

“Dickinson State has really improved throughout the course of the season, and they are playing well right now,” Mouat said. “They, like Rocky, have a big group of kids who play inside and are very effective in getting them the ball. On the perimeter, they shoot it well.”

Meanwhile, the Skylights must try and hold their ground in the Frontier after losing three straight games. Northern lost a heartbreaker to Western last Thursday and played well in a loss to top-ranked Westminster on senior night last Saturday. So on the road, the Skylights will look to seniors Nikki Tresch, Jordan Bruursema, Kylee Denham, as well as junior Laci Keller, to lead them into the playoffs.

“Both teams present big challenges, and we had good games with both Dickinson and Rocky here at home,” Mouat said. “With so much at stake for about four teams in our league right now, it will be important that we again take to the road with a sense of urgency and get off to a good start on our opponent’s home floor. This is a big, big weekend for us, especially if we want to put ourselves in a position to host a tournament game in Havre. That’s been a big goal of this team from day one. They know what’s at stake, and are excited for the challenges both teams will bring.”
Tonight’s game at RMC in Billings tips off at 5:30. Saturday night’s regular season finale begins at 5:30 p.m. in Dickinson, N.D. Both games can be viewed live on the internet by going to www.msun.edu/athletics.