HELENA — The Montana State University-Northern women’s basketball team watched the Carroll College Fighting Saints run away with a Frontier Conference game, using the 3-point-line as the spark back on Feb. 8 in Helena.

On Saturday night, the Skylights were back in the Carroll P.E. Center, and with their season hanging in the balance, it must have felt like the same story all over again.

The No. 24 Saints used a devastating 21-4 run in the early stages of the second half, including back-to-back three’s from Megan Patterson and drives by Torrie Cahill, to blow by the Skylights 73-52 in the Frontier Conference semifinals Saturday night in Helena.

The loss bought Northern’s season to an end. The Skylights finished the year with a 17-13 overall record, went 8-8 and finished in fourth place in league play, and reached the Frontier semifinals for the second straight season.

“There were a lot of low points this season, and it would have been easy for this team to tank it,” Northern head coach Chris Mouat said. “But they didn’t. They fought back from everything that happened to them this year. They just kept coming back with a lot of resolve and a lot of character and I’m so proud of them for that.

“Unfortunately, we just didn’t play well enough tonight to give ourselves a chance to keep our season going.”

The Skylight actually did play very well in the first half. Coming off a career game against Rocky Mountain College last Wednesday, Laci Keller picked up right where she left off. She scored seven of Northern’s first eight points Saturday and Carroll couldn’t stop her as the Skylights led 11-10 early on. Carroll did reel off an 11-0 run to build up an 18-10 lead with 8:18 left in the first half, but the Skylights weren’t ready to go away.

Freshman Kacie McKeon sparked Northern with a five-point spurt, including a long trey from the top of the key, and from there, the Skylights battled their way back, and only trailed Carroll 28-24 at halftime.

“I thought we got off to a pretty good start offensively,” Mouat said. “Laci continued to play really well, and we answered their (Saints) one big run in the half. We were pretty happy with where we were at at halftime.

“But that stretch they (Saints) went on in the second half, we had no answers for,” he continued. “They made too many big shots, we missed too many easy shots, we had too many breakdowns defensively and they made us pay for every one of them.”
The stretch Mouat spoke of came quick, and it pretty much ended the Skylights’ season. Patterson rose up and hit two key jumpers three minutes in to the second half, while Cahill drove to the basket time and time again during a run which saw Northern hit just one field goal in a seven minute span. By the time the Skylights finally got a shot to go in from Nikki Tresch, Carroll was ahead 53-36 with 9:30 to play, and the Saints made sure the Skylights weren’t going to come back.

"Give Carroll credit," Mouat said. "They are a very good team and they played great tonight. They made a lot of big shots in the second half, and Torrie Cahill really took the game over. We just didn’t answer when we needed too."

Keller led the Skylights with 17 points. Jordan Bruursema scored 10, Kylee Denham added five and Tresch scored four in what was the final game for all three seniors. McKeon added a solid seven off the bench.

Carroll, which will play in tonight’s Frontier championship game at Westminster, got a whopping 25 points from Cahill. The Saints made seven three’s to just three for Northern, and also out-rebounded the Skylights 42-24, including a huge edge of the offensive glass.

Carroll will surely advance to the NAIA national tournament. And though Saturday night was a bitter end for the Skylights, Mouat said it won’t diminish the season his team put together.

"We started 2-3 in the conference, we went through a lot of injury problems, and yet this team kept finding a way to win big games," Mouat said. "We went 4-4 on the road in this league, and that’s really difficult to do. We hosted a playoff game, and we really got better down the stretch.

“This team just kept coming back and fighting,” Mouat added. “They never quit. Not once. And I’m very proud of them, and what they accomplished this season.”

**Carroll 73, Skylights 52**

**MSU-N** — Jordan Bruursema 3-5 3-3 10, Laci Keller 5-8 7-9 17, Nikki Tresch 0-6 4-4 4, Taylor Cummings 2-5 0-0 4, Kylee Denham 1-5 3-4 5, Kassie Barta 1-2 0-0 3, Kacie McKeon 1-5 4-4 7, Rachelle Bennett 0-7 2-2 2, Leah Olson 0-0 0-0 0, Macey Cox 0-0 0-0 0, Maurisha McKissic 0-4 0-0 0, Micahela Howe-Cobb 0-0 0-0 0. Team totals 13-47 23-26 52.

**CC** — Joey O’Neill 1-3 0-0 2, Torrie Cahill 10-12 3-4 25, Kalee Junkermier 1-6 2-3 4, Megan Patterson 4-7 0-0 10, Bailey Snelling 4-6 2-2 11, Katie Estey 1-5 0-0 2, Cassie Anderson 1-2 1-2 3, Jordan Pfau 3-6 0-0 8, Jackie Gebhardt 0-0 0-0 0, Jordan Johnston 0-0 2-2 2, Chelsea Chandler 0-0 0-0 0, Jordan Bagley 3-7 0-0 6. Team 28-54 10-13 73.