It’s no secret that Montana State University-Northern women’s basketball coach Chris Mouat has a strong philosophy when it comes to piecing together a non-conference schedule. Mouat wants to play the best teams he can, at home or away, and get his team as many challenges as he can before the start of Frontier Conference play.

And with the looks of the 2013-14 Skylight schedule, it’s mission accomplished yet again.

Mouat recently announced the completion of this upcoming season’s schedule, and there are several big dates on the calendar before Frontier play fully begins in January.

The Skylights will open the season Oct. 24 against the University of Lethbridge Pronghorns, and they’ll remain in the Armory Gymnasium to face Mount Royal University Oct. 27.

From there however, Northern embarks on an ambitious and difficult month of November.

The Skylights will play Cascade Conference powers Eastern Oregon and Corban College in Spokane Nov. 1-2, then the real fun begins as they take to the road for back-to-back games against NCAA Division I powerhouse teams from a year ago. On Nov. 8, the Skylights will face the University of Wyoming, a team from the prestigious Mountain West Conference, and a former NIT champion. The game will take place in Sheridan, Wyo., while just two nights later, the Skylights will make their annual trek to Missoula and famed Dahlberg Arena to face the University of Montana Lady Griz. UM was the Big Sky champion a season ago, and played in the NCAA Tournament.

“The games against the Cowgirls and Grizzlies will be huge tests for us,” Mouat said. “We’ll be a young team and those games will be great in helping us grow. They will also really gives us good exposure, so it’s exciting to play two great programs like Wyoming and Montana this season.”

Northern also has a pair of NCAA DII teams on its docket this season. A week after facing the Cowgirls and Lady Griz, the Skylights will be at the UGF Tournament in Great Falls for a pair of games, including against NCAA DII stalwart Nebraska-Kearney. Northern will also travel to Billings to face MSU-B Nov. 27.

And the month of November will close just as difficult as it started as the Skylights rekindle their rivalry with Carroll College Nov. 30 at the Armory Gymnasium. For the second straight year, Northern and Carroll will open Frontier Conference play in Havre. The Saints, who went to the NAIA national tournament a year ago, knocked Northern out of the Frontier semifinals in Helena back in March.

“The month of November is going to be a big challenge for us,” Mouat said. “Eastern Oregon was 28-4 a year ago, we’ve got four games against NCAA opponents and we play Carroll at home. That stretch is really going to be tough, but it’s going to serve as well I believe.”
Northern will also get used to playing on the road during non-conference play, as the Skylights have just one home game in November, and then don’t play again at home until they host their annual Holiday Tournament Dec. 19-21. The tourney will feature Northern, Rocky Mountain College and UGF, and also three teams from out-of-state. MSU-N then goes right back on the road for a pair of games in Las Vegas to close out the 2013 portion of its schedule.

In conference play, MSU-N re-stars with road games at Rocky and Dickinson State Jan. 2 and Jan. 4. MSU-N is home three times in January, with games against UM-Western Jan. 9 and Westminster College Jan. 11. The Griffins are the four-time defending league champion and a perennial national tourney team. MSU-N then rekindles its budding rivalry with the University of Great Falls Jan. 24 in Havre, before turning right around and playing in Great Falls Jan. 30.

The month of February has the Skylights playing four at home, and rival Lewis-Clark State. Northern travels to Lewiston, Idaho Feb. 1 then welcomes in the Warriors Feb. 8, the night after hosting Montana Tech. MSU-N closes out its home schedule with Dickinson State on Feb. 20 and RMC Feb. 21. The Frontier playoffs are set for the following week.

“Our schedule is certainly going to get us ready for our league and what we’ll face night in, and night out,” Mouat said. “We have a lot of new faces this year, and we’re going to have to grow and come together fast because right out of the gates, there are no easy games on this schedule.

“But that’s the way we want it,” he added. "We want to be tested and challenged and this schedule will do that for us.”

**Skylights 2013-14 Basketball Schedule**

Oct. 24 vs Lethbridge  
Oct. 27 vs Mount Royal  
Nov. 1 vs Eastern Oregon At Spokane  
Nov. 2 vs Corban College At Spokane  
Nov. 8 at Wyoming At Sheridan, Wyo.  
Nov. 10 at Montana  
Nov. 15 vs Pacific Union At Great Falls  
Nov. 16 vs Nebraska-Kearney At Great Falls  
Nov. 27 at MSU-Billings  
Nov. 30 vs Carroll College  
Dec. 6 at Augustana  
Dec. 7 at Augustana  
Dec. 19-21 MSU-N Tourney Teams TBA  
Dec. 27 vs Regina At Las Vegas  
Dec. 28 vs McGill University At Las Vegas  
Jan. 2 at Rocky Mountain  
Jan. 4 at Dickinson State  
Jan. 9 vs UM-Western  
Jan. 11 vs Westminster  
Jan. 17 at Montana Tech  
Jan. 18 at Carroll College  
Jan. 24 vs Great Falls  
Jan. 30 at Great Falls  
Feb. 1 at Lewis-Clark State  
Feb. 7 vs Montana Tech  
Feb. 8 vs Lewis Clark State  
Feb. 13 at UM-Western  
Feb. 15 at Westminster  
Feb. 20 vs Dickinson State  
Feb. 21 vs Rocky Mountain