Skylights head north for non-league games
By George Ferguson
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After an important win over Carroll College to open Frontier Conference play, the Montana State University-Northern women’s basketball team heads back on the road.

Northern (7-0) will be in Camrose, Alberta, tonight and Saturday to take on the University of Alberta-Augustana. Tonight’s game tips off at 6 and Saturday’s game is scheduled for 1 p.m.

MSU-N, which has only suffered losses in three exhibition games against NCAA teams this season, got its Frontier schedule off to a stellar start by beating Carroll 52-42 last Saturday night in Havre. With the win, Northern is now among the top defensive teams in all of NAIA basketball. And while the Vikings won’t be the same type of team that Carroll was, the Skylights and head coach Chris Mouat know they need to be sharp this weekend in Canada.

"Alberta-Augustana is off to a great start this year, and they are going to provide a solid test for us,” Mouat said. “They have three very good big kids, and all are 6-2 or better. They also have great quickness on the perimeter. They are a complete team, and we need to be solid at both ends to beat them.”

Of course, Northern has been solid, especially of late. The Skylights are getting great production out of 6-5 junior forward A’Jha Edwards, who averages 11 points and nine rebounds per game. And against a bigger team like Augustana, here play will be key. But MSU-N is balanced, too. Junior Rachelle Bennett has become a dynamic scorer for Northern, while point guard Taylor Cummings has been steady. Northern, which will likely be without sophomore guard Kacie McKeon due to an ankle injury, will also look to the continued good play of junior Megan Feldman, as well as freshman Natalee Faupel. Feldman, who has been an outstanding rebounder and defender all season, scored a career-high 15 points in last Saturday’s victory over Carroll.

The Vikings will challenge Northern’s talented lineup with the likes of 6-2 forwards Kelsey Lund and Sydney Purdy, who average 16 and 10 points, respectively. Forward Taryn Story averages 13 points per outing, while guard Kari Kukenic scores 11 per night for the Vikings. Also, this weekend’s games will be a challenge for the Skylights because they will be playing FIBA rules basketball, so Mouat knows, between the changes in play and the talent the Vikings have, his team will have its hands full north of the border.

“Playing in their gym with some different rules will be a bit of a challenge as well,” he said. “For us to be successful, we’re going to have to control the tempo as best we can and win on the boards. We’re really going to have to show up ready to play because Augustana has been very successful and is a team playing with a lot of confidence right now. They will pose some matchup problems because of their size, and with four different kids averaging in double-figures, you know they have a lot of weapons.”

Tonight’s game between MSU-N and Augustana tips off at 6, while Saturday’s game will be played at 1 p.m. Both games take place in Camrose, Alberta. The Skylights will then have a week off before hosting the Duck Inn Holiday Classic Dec. 19-21.