It was clear from the onset that the Montana State University-Northern Skylights were going to be too much for the New Hope Christian Deacons to handle. But what was unclear was just how hot the Skylights would get in the first half. And the answer was, while frigid outside, Northern made the first half feel like the two teams were playing in the tropics.

MSU-N made six straight 3-pointers at the end of the first half, and overall shot 60 percent from three in the first 20 minutes, as the No. 24 Skylights blew by the NCCAA Deacons 62-24 on the opening night of the Duck Inn Holiday Classic Thursday at the Armory Gymnasium.

The win improved Northern’s overall record to 10-0 on the season, and the first half was as complete a half as the Skylights have played in some time.

“We did shoot the ball very well in the first half,” Northern head coach Chris Mouat said. “But more importantly, I liked how well we executed our man-to-man defense. We came out ready to play, and we really played well on the defensive end. We shut them (Deacons) down pretty good, and that’s a team which has some very capable scorers.

“And our defense did transfer over to some very good offense,” he continued. “So I was really pleased with that first half. It was a very complete half.”
“It’s nice to see us shoot the ball that well,” Mouat said. “And it was really nice to see how balanced we were in that first half. We shot it extremely well, but it was different kids making those shots. And we really did share the ball well. We were making the extra pass, and the shots were falling.

“What I wasn’t pleased with is how we played in the second half,” he continued. “When you shoot it as well as we did, coupled with how well we played on defense, you expect to jump on teams like we did. But we didn’t follow it up in the second half, and I told the kids I wasn’t happy with how we played that second 20 minutes. Credit to New Hope, they kept playing hard, and they made some nice adjustments on us with their zone defense. But I really thought we kind of went to sleep in the second half, and if we want to be a complete team, we’ve got to keep working hard for a full 40 minutes.”

Northern didn’t make a single three in the second stanza, while New Hope did manage to forge a 14-14 tie. However, there would be no comeback by the short-handed Deacons, who were held to a dismal 16 percent shooting, and were out-rebounded by the Skylights 47-25. MSU-N’s stingy defense also forced New Hope into 18 turnovers.

Offensively, MSU-N was balanced with Cummings scoring 11 points and making three trey’s. Bennett and Kreycik added 10 points each, while Megan Feldman scored eight and Edwards finished with six points and a game-high 14 boards. Dorian Perkey led the Deacons, who play Rocky Mountain College tonight, with nine points. MSU-N held star New Hope guard Lei Lolohea to just seven points.

“IT was a really good first half,” Mouat said. “I liked how well-prepared we were, and I liked our intensity. I would have liked to have seen us play better in the second half, but it’s a win and we’ll learn from it and move on to Saturday night’s game.”

The Duck Inn Holiday Classic continues tonight with RMC facing New Hope at 6 and the University of Great Falls battling Northwest Indian College at 8. Rocky defeated NW Indian Thursday night. MSU-N returns to the floor to face NW Indian at 7 p.m. Saturday.

Skylights are 10-0 overall; Next Up: Vs NW Indian College on Saturday

Skylights 62, New Hope 24

NHC – Lei Lolohea 2-7 2-4 7, Jess Logan 0-6 3-4 3, Dorian Perkey 3-15 2-4 9, Taya Habrick 0-6 1-2 1, Natriana Shorter 1-7 0-0 2, Annaliesse Denn 1-2 0-0 2. Totals: 7-43 8-14 24.

MSU-N – Megan Feldman 4-5 1-2 8, A’Jha Edwards 3-7 0-0 6, Natalee Faupel 2-6 0-0 4, Rachelle Bennett 3-12 2-2 10, Taylor Cummings 4-7 0-0 11, Kassie Barta 3-6 0-0 8, Taryn Norby 0-2 0-0 0, Molly Kreycik 3-5 2-2 10, Jordan Powers 0-4 0-0 0, Taybra Teeters 1-1 3-5 5. Totals: 23-55 7-10 62.

Halftime: Northern 48-10. 3-pointers: MSU-N 9-25 (Bennett 2, Cummings 3, Barta 2, Kreycik 2), NHC 2-8 (Lolohea 1, Perkey 1); Rebounds: MSU-N 47 (Edwards 14), NHC 25 (Logan 5); Fouls: MSU-N 9, NHC 13; Fouled out: None.