Skylights fall in Vegas
By George Ferguson
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The Montana State University-Northern women’s basketball team saw its 12-game winning streak come to an end under the bright Las Vegas lights this past weekend. But the Skylights didn’t give up the streak without a good fight.

Northern played two games at the Frontier College Las Vegas Shootout this weekend, falling to the University of Regina 63-56 and McGill University 59-51. The two losses ended non-conference play, with the No. 24 Skylights sitting at a sparkling 11-2 and 1-0 in the Frontier Conference.

Northern’s Friday game was moved back to later in the evening, due to travel issues Thursday. But the main trouble for the Skylights was the Regina Cougars, who are ranked No. 4 in CIS, which is Canada’s top level of college basketball. MSU-N hung tough, and was down by six points with under a minute to go. But Northern missed a chance to cut into the lead, and the Cougars held on via the foul line. Northern led Regina at halftime, and held a seven point lead with just over 10 minutes left in the game.

A’Jha Edwards paced the Skylights with 14 points, while Rachelle Bennett and Taylor Cummings each scored 10. The Skylights were once again without injured starter Kacie McKeon.

“Very proud of our kids’ effort, and how they were able to come in and play so hard against Regina after all the things we had to go through to get there,” Northern head coach Chris Mouat said. “We were kind of behind the eight ball a little with all of the problems we had getting in, but I thought our kids dealt with all of it really well, and they played really well.

“But we won’t make any excuses either. Regina is just a very tough, big and physical team, and they had great shooters,” he continued. “And that’s what we didn’t do well enough, was shoot the ball. We defended well enough to win and we rebounded well enough, but we didn’t shoot it consistently enough.”

Mouat noted the same was true in Saturday afternoon’s loss to McGill, the eighth-ranked team in the CIS. Again, MSU-N stayed close the whole way, but couldn’t quite get over the hump from an offensive standpoint.

Cummings led Northern, which made just one 3-pointer, with 10 points, while Edwards added nine and Bennett had eight. Molly Kreycik came off the bench to give the Skylights seven points.

“McGill was a totally different team than Regina, but still very good,” Mouat said. “They were fast and quick and athletic. They defended very well, and they shot it very well. And, again, we just didn’t do enough on offense to get over the hump.”

Even though the Skylights dropped two games in Las Vegas, Northern will still enter Frontier Conference play on a high. After all, the three Canadian powers in Las Vegas this weekend were successful against all of the Frontier teams there. So Mouat said it was a great way for his team to prepare for this weekend’s Frontier games against Rocky Mountain College and Dickinson State.

“Both teams we played were really good,” Mouat said. “They were both legit, so this experience was good for us. These teams were the real deal, and it was good to play that kind of competition right before we start league play.

"I’m proud of the way our kids played this weekend," he continued. "I’m very proud of the effort, and how they responded to quite a bit of adversity."
The Skylights will be in Billings for a Frontier game against Rocky Mountain College Thursday night. Northern visits Dickinson State Saturday night. MSU-N returns home to host UM-Western Jan. 9.

**Regina 63, Skylights 56**

MSU-N – Megan Feldman 3-6, 1-2 6, A’Jha Edwards 7-14 0-1 14, Natalee Faupel 2-5 1-2 5, Rachelle Bennett 3-15 3-4 10, Taylor Cummings 4-12 1-2 10, Kassie Barta 1-8 0-0 3, Molly Kreycik 1-2 3-4 6, Taybra Teeters 1-5 0-0 2. Totals: 22-67 8-14 56.

Halftime: Northern 23-22. MSU-N: 3-pointers 4-14 (Bennett 1, Cummings 1, Barta 1, Kreycik 1); Rebounds: 37 (Edwards 6, Teeters 6); Fouls: 16. Fouled out: Feldman.

**McGill 59, Skylights 51**

MSU-N – Megan Feldman 2-4 2-4 6, A’Jha Edwards 4-7 1-2 9, Natalee Faupel 1-6 4-4 6, Rachelle Bennett 4-11 0-0 8, Taylor Cummings 3-9 4-4 10, Kassie Barta 1-4 1-3 4, Molly Kreycik 2-9 3-4 7, Taybra Teeters 0-0 1-2 1. Totals: 17-50 16-23 51.

Halftime: McGill 31-24. MSU-N: 3-pointers: 1-9 (Barta 1); Rebounds: 37 (Feldman 8); Fouls: 15. Fouled out: None.