Hi-Line Coaching Profile: Chris Mouat, MSU-Northern women’s basketball
Things coming full circle for MSU-N’s Mouat
By George Ferguson
March 19, 2014

Things have a funny way of working out. The last time the Montana State University-Northern Skylights went to the NAIA national tournament, it was held in Jackson, Tenn. That happened to be Chris Mouat’s rookie season as a head coach.

Eight years later, Mouat is a veteran of the NAIA and Frontier Conference coaching ranks, and he, and his Skylights are heading back to the big dance. But the destination is different. Frankfort, Ky., is the site of this year’s national tournament.

And it just so happens, Mouat is a Kentucky guy. No, Chris is born and raised Montana, but he’s a rabid University of Kentucky fan, and Lexington, the UK campus and famed Rupp Arena isn’t all that far from Frankfort.

So now, as the Skylights embark on their national tournament journey, a journey Mouat has dreamed of, and worked tirelessly to get to again, he also gets to fulfill another dream, and that’s at least see where his favorite basketball team calls home.

But Mouat and the Skylights are also all business this week in Frankfort. His Northern team has had a spectacular season. In fact, the Skylights have been having great seasons for the better part of Mouat’s tenure at Northern, a tenure that has now seen MSU-N reach two national tournaments, get to the Frontier semifinals five different times, and finish in the top half of the league standings in six different seasons. Under Mouat, Northern has simply become one of the most consistent program’s in all of the Frontier Conference.

Here are five questions with Northern’s leader as the Skylights get set to face off against Columbia College later today.

**HDN**: What was it like to tell your team that they were officially in the national tournament?

**Mouat**: “I sent them a group text because I wanted them all to find out at the same time. It’s a pretty special feeling when you find out it’s official. It brought back a lot of memories from my first year here. That team was a very special group. And so is this team now. I’ve had that same feeling about this group all season, that they were a lot like that first team. So it was pretty special to tell them they are going to the national tournament.”
**HDN:** What are some high points from this season for you?

**Mouat:** “We’ve had a lot of them. A unique one was going down to Dickinson (N.D.) and tying our own record of 13-of-22 from three. We set that record a few years back, in Dickinson and we had the exact same shooting night this time around. That was really cool. And overall, just seeing these kids win big games, especially on the road. We beat a lot of really good teams on the road this season, and that speaks to the high level this team has played at this season.”

**HDN:** So you love the Kentucky Wildcats and you’re going to the Blue Grass State. That has to be neat?

**Mouat:** “I grew up a Kentucky fan. That’s been my team through good times and bad. So it will be pretty cool to see Rupp Arena. For me, it’s a personal, really cool thing. It’s definitely a bucket list thing for me.”

**HDN:** You’ve been at Northern for a long time now. What’s the experience been like?

**Mouat:** “It’s been a great ride. And it’s all due to the kids we’ve had here. Every player I’ve coached means a ton to me. There’s been ups and downs, you go through a lot in college basketball. But the kids make it what it is. All the kids I’ve coached here have made our program what it is, and they still do. I heard from a lot of former players when they found out we were going to the national tournament. That was pretty special.”

**HDN:** It’s going to be a great experience for your team, playing at the national tournament. But they’re not satisfied with just getting there?

**Mouat:** “No. Our kids are still hungry. The way we lost the LC (State) game I think gave them even more of a desire to go down to Kentucky and play well. We did everything we could do to win that game and it just didn’t happen for us. But it left our kids hungry. They want to keep playing. They are excited to go down there and enjoy the experience. They will have fun and take it all in. But they are also focused and they’ll be ready to play Columbia on Wednesday.”