Skylights soar past Eagles in home opener

By George Ferguson
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For the Montana State University-Northern Skylights, the Armory Gymnasium was kind Thursday night. For the visiting Northwest Indian College Eagles, not so much.

In their home opener in front of a good crowd at the Armory, the Skylights improved to 3-0 on the season by trouncing the Eagles 87-30.

Northern shot a blistering 60 percent from the field in the second half, breaking the game wide open in the process. But as good of a finish as the Skylights had, veteran head coach Chris Mouat thought his team should have, and could have played better in the first 20 minutes.

“I was really frustrated with our offensive execution in the first half,” Mouat said. “We got out quick, but then we got stuck on 13 points for about 10 minutes it seemed. They (Eagles) did a nice job with their zone defense, and it bothered us. So we’re going to need to get better with that in a hurry, because we’re going to see a full dose of it on Sunday.

“But I was very pleased with the second half,” he continued. “We adjusted well, we shared the ball really well. Everybody got into the act, and we went on a really nice run to kind of put them away. So I was proud of the kids for coming out and playing much better on that end.”

The Skylights did indeed put the Eagles away quickly in the second half. Leading 33-16 at the break, Northern scored the first 14 points of the second stanza, and when Jacy Thompson buried a 3-pointer after the Eagles finally answered, MSU-N had a 51-17 lead with over 10 minutes to go, and the Skylights never looked back.

The 3-pointers, and big scoring runs, were key for the Skylights. Northern went on runs of 13-0 and 10-0 in the first half, and both spurts were sparked the 3-point bomb. During the early run, Thompson, a true freshman from Townsend, scored eight straight points. Later, Taryn Norby, a sophomore from Chinook, buried two triples, sending the Skylights into the half with a 17-point lead.

In the second frame, Natalee Faupel showed off her shooting range. She made two triples and scored 11 points in a two-minute span as the Eagles’ defense had no answer for the 2014 Frontier All-Conference standout.

Faupel finished with a season-high 25 points, going 9-of-14 from the floor, and making four treys. She also grabbed eight rebounds. Thompson scored 13 in her first start, and went 3-for-4 from beyond the arc. Rebounding was also key as Northern dominated the interior. A’Jha Edwards had her first double-double of the season with 13 points and 10 boards, while MSU-N out-rebounded the Eagles 54-15.

“I was really happy with the way we played defensively the whole night,” Mouat said. “And we were very good on the boards, which we should be.”
Northern was also balanced in the score sheet, and for the second game in a row, the Skylights played a bevy of players for extended minutes. Cydney Auzenne, who also plays on the MSU-N volleyball team, scored seven points, while Norby added nine in the win.

And while Mouat sees plenty to work on ahead of Sunday’s game with Warner-Pacific, he was also pleased with how his team performed in their home opener.

"We had a great crowd tonight," Mouat said. "And that was really good, four our kids to experience that. And I am pleased with how we played for the most part. It’s another win, and we’ll learn from it and go forward from here.”

The Skylights will be back in the Armory to host the Warner-Pacific Knights on Sunday. Tipoff is slated for 5 p.m.

**Skylights are 3-0; Next Up: Vs Warner-Pacific Sunday**

**Skylights 87, NW Indian College 30**

**NWIC** – Rochone Qusala 1-9 0-0 3, Elizabeth Isaac 1-5 0-0 2, Krista Colvin 1-2 0-0 2, Jolene Nagy 2-9 0-0 5, Shani Angus-McMillen 1-1 0-0 2, Jasmine Reid-Montgomery 3-12 1-4 8, Jade Montgomery-Warrdenburg 2-7 3-6 7. Totals: 11-50 5-13.

**MSU-N** – A’Jha Edwards 3-4 4-4 10, Jacy Thompson 5-9 0-0 13, Natalee Faupel 9-14 3-6 25, Taylor Cummings 4-8 0-0 9, Brandy Lambourne 0-2 0-0 0, Megan Feldman 2-4 0-0 4, Taryn Norby 3-9 0-0 9, Makhayla Farmer 1-4 2-4 4, Cydney Auzenne 2-2 1-2 7, Taybra Teeters 3-3 0-0 6. Totals: 32-59 11-17.

Halftime: Northern 33-16. 3-pointers MSU-N 12-20 (Thompson 3, Faupel 4, Cummings 1, Norby 3, Auzenne 1), NWIC 3-10 (Colvin 1, Nagy 1, Montgomery-Reid 1). Rebounds: MSU-N 54 (Edwards 13), NWIC 15 (Isaacs 3). Fouls: MSU-N 11, NWIC 15. Fouled out: None.

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