The Montana State University-Northern women’s basketball team is off to a terrific start this season. But the Skylights were faced with their first true NAIA tests of the season this past weekend in Phoenix.

However, if San Diego Christian and Arizona Christian were the tests for Northern in what is still a young season, the Skylights passed with flying colors.

Last Friday night, the No. 21 Skylights dismantled San Diego Christian 79-41 in the opening night of the Arizona Christian Tournament. Saturday night, MSU-N took care of the host Firestorm, winning 71-42.

“I’m really proud of our kids,” said Northern head coach Chris Mouat. “This was the start of a tough three-week stretch for us. And it’s a tough trip down there. But our kids just flat-out showed up. They were ready to go, and to beat two quality NAIA teams like we did, that says a lot about our kids’ focus right now.”

Friday night’s game with the Hawks wasn’t as close as the final score would indicate. MSU-N jumped out to an 8-0 lead in less than two minutes, and after that, two Northern 3-pointers sent the Skylights on their way to their best half of basketball this season.

When the dust settled on the first half, Northern was ahead 53-12. The Skylights shot a blistering 61 percent in the half and made six of their eight 3-point attempts. But it was on the defensive end where Northern was absolutely spectacular. Northern held the Hawks to just five field goals and 20 percent shooting through the first 20 minutes.

And from there, MSU-N was able to coast to the victory. Every Skylight on the trip played in the second half, and every player got into the box score, on a night Northern was simply at its best against a GSAC opponent.

“We just got off to such a great start,” Mouat said. “Our kids really showed up. We got the offense going early, but really, we just played so good on both ends. I mean, to hold an NAIA opponent, from a great conference like the GSAC is, to just 12 points in a half, that’s just a tremendous defensive effort by our kids.

“We just played really well on both ends,” he continued. “We shot the ball well, we rebounded it well, and everybody contributed. I thought our bench gave us a great lift. It was just a really well-played game.”

Five Skylights reached double figures Friday night, with freshman Jacy Thompson scoring 12 on four 3-pointers. Taybra Teeters added 12 points and five rebounds, while A’Jha Edwards scored 11 and Natalee Faupel and Taylor Cummings each scored 10.
And as well as Northern played Friday night, the Skylights continued the trend Saturday against Arizona Christian. However, this time, Mouat said his team didn’t start quite as well. Still, thanks to another smothering defensive effort, MSU-N led 30-16 at halftime, and the Skylights were never really threatened in the second stanza.

“Saturday night’s game was much tougher on us,” Mouat said. “We didn’t play well offensively in the first half. Fortunately though, we did continue to play really well defensively. Arizona Christian has a lot of talented scorers, but again, we just played really good defense.

“And that defense continued in the second half, and eventually, we got the offense, too,” he continued. “I thought we rebounded really well again. A’Jha had a monster game. She played huge for us. And we got another nice lift from our bench. It was more of a grind on Saturday night, but I’m still really pleased with how we finished, and proud of the kids for how they played, especially defensively.”

Edwards was indeed special. She scored a season-high 20 points on 9-of-20 shooting. The Tuscon, Arizona native also grabbed a season-high 21 rebounds, which, for the second time in her career, was one short of the MSU-N single-game record. Faupel added 12 points, while Thompson and Feldman each chipped in with 10 points.

The two wins in Arizona pushed the Skylights’ record to 8-0. Northern is back on the road this weekend with two tough games at the UGF Tournament in Great Falls. Friday, MSU-N plays Corban College and Saturday, the Skylights face Dakota Wesleyan.

Lights drop two in Portland

The Montana State University-Northern men were also on a long road trip this past weekend, a trip that carried over into Monday.

The Lights started the Portland, Oregon road swing with a tough win over Portland Bible College Friday night. Northern had to get a late Trevail Lee shot to lift the Lights to a stellar, 68-67 victory.

Lee scored with just 12 seconds remaining in the game. On the other end, PBC had two chances to win, but big rebounds by Pat Jensen and Corbin Pearson sealed the victory for the Lights.

Lee finished with a game-high 17 points to lead MSU-N.

With Friday night’s win, MSU-N turned its attention to Warner-Pacific Saturday night. The Knights are a premier Cascade Conference powerhouse, and for the second time in three years, they were able to upend the Lights. On their home floor, the Knights bested the Lights 65-58.

“It was tough,” Northern head coach Shawn Huse said. “We lost the lead in the second half and couldn’t quite get it back. We’re battling the flu bug right now, and that doesn’t help on a long road trip. But we played a good team in Warner-Pacific, and we needed to play better than we did.”

Northern played well in the first half, and led 31-30 at the break. But, the Lights went stone cold in the second half, and the Knights took advantage. The Lights shot just 29 percent from the floor in the final 20 minutes, and for the game, they made just five threes in what turned out to be their first loss of the new season.

The Lights did get a huge effort from Pearson, who scored 23 points and grabbed eight boards. Warren Edmonson added 11 points, but the Lights just couldn’t overcome their offensive woes in the second half.

After having Sunday off, the Lights wrapped up their road trip with a Monday night game against Concordia University of Portland. But, even with a day of rest, and a herculean effort from Pearson, things once again didn’t go the Lights’ way in Portland.

Northern fell to Concordia 81-73 in a game that Pearson poured in 30 points. Like Warner-Pacific, Concordia is a member of the Cascade Conference.
MSU-N got off to a decent start Monday night, but the Cavaliers got hot midway through the first half. They shot nearly 60 percent in the first 20 minutes and went on an 11-0 run, which eventually pushed them to a 40-29 halftime lead.

From there, Northern would have to play catch-up. MSU-N shot the ball much better, 56 percent, in the second stanza, and the Lights got off to a stellar start, cutting the lead to 46-45 early in the half. But the Cavaliers went on a 9-0 run from there, pushing the lead back to double digits. The Lights cut it down to seven several times, and were within seven with just under a minute to go when Pearson knocked in a triple. But that’s as close as Northern would get as the Lights lost for the second time in the last three days.

Pearson finished an amazing 13-of-14 from the field, with one triple and nine rebounds — all game highs. Edmonson also drilled five of Northern’s seven treys and scored 17, while Nicholas Blount added 11.

With the two losses in Oregon, Northern dropped to 6-2 overall and will have a week off before traveling Idaho for games against Northwest Nazarene and College of Idaho.

**Skylights 79, San Diego Christian 41**

**MSU-N** – Jacy Thompson 4-7 0-0 12, Taybra Teeters 5-10 2-2 12, Natalee Faupel 4-5 0-0 10, Megan Feldman 5-9 0-0 10, Taylor Cummings 2-2 0-0 5, A'Jha Edwards 5-9 1-1 11, Taryn Norby 3-8 0-0 7, Makhayla Farmer 3-7 0-0 6, Molly Kreycik 1-3 2-4 4, Brandy Lambourne 1-4 0-0 2. Totals: 33-64 5-7 79.

Halftime: Northern 53-12. 3-pointers 8-14 (Thompson 4, Faupel 2, Cummings 1, Norby 1). Rebounds 35 (Teeters 5). Fouls 12. Fouled out None.

**Skylights 71, Arizona Christian 42**

**MSU-N** – A'Jha Edwards 9-20 2-2 20, Natalee Faupel 3-5 5-6 12, Jacy Thompson 2-5 4-4 10, Megan Feldman 5-6 0-0 10, Taylor Cummings 3-9 0-0 7, Brandy Lambourne 2-3 0-0 5, Taybra Teeters 2-5 0-2 4, Makhayla Farmer 1-2 0-0 2, Molly Kreycik 0-2 1-2 1, Taryn Norby 0-2 0-2. Totals: 27=59 12-18 71.

Halftime: Northern 30-16. 3-pointers 5-11 (Thompson 2, Cummings 1, Lambourne 1, Faupel 1). Rebounds 33 (Edwards 21). Fouls 17. Fouled out None.

**Warner Pacific 65, Lights 58**

**MSU-N** – Corbin Pearson 8-16 7-8 23, Warren Edmonson 4-9 1-2 11, Damien Robinson 1-1 0-0 2, Nicholas Blount 0-2 1-2 1, Jermaine Graves 0-4 0-0 0, Dylan Tatarka 3-4 0-0 8, Trevail Lee 1-9 4-5 7, KJ Rech 2-4 0-0 4, Pat Jensen 1-2 0-0 2, Brett Thompson 0-1 0-0 0. Totals: 20-52 13-17 58.

Halftime: Northern 31-30. 3-pointers 5-23 (Edmonson 2, Tatarka 2, Lee 1). Rebounds 33 (Pearson 9). Fouls 25. Fouled out Jensen.

**Concordia-Portland 81, Lights 73**

**MSU-N** – Trevail Lee 0-4 0-0 0, Nicholas Blount 3-7 2-2 11, Jermaine Graves 0-3 6-8 6, Corbin Pearson 13-14 3-6 30, Warren Edmonson 5-10 4-4 17, Dylan Tatarka 0-4 0-0 0, Damien Robinson 2-4 1-2 5, Pat Jensen 0-1 2-4 2, KJ Rech 1-3 0-0 2. Totals: 24-50 18-26.


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