Skylights cruise on Black Friday
Northern women crush Valley City State to remain unbeaten
By George Ferguson
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The Montana State University-Northern Skylights have been on the road so much this season, they might have forgotten what the inside of the Armory Gymnasium looked like. But it didn’t take Northern long to remember just how to play inside the grand old arena.

Northern was at home for the first time in over a month Friday night, and the No. 21 Skylights blitzed visiting Valley City State, 69-41. The win over the Vikings, who play in the NAIA Northstar Athletic Conference, pushed MSU-N’s perfect record 11-0 with just five non-conference games left in the 2014-15 season.

And while Northern’s record remains perfect, the Skylights were pretty close to it in some areas Friday night. MSU-N shot a stellar 61 percent from the floor and went 8-of-11 from the 3-point-line. On the other side, Northern got off to a fast start by smothering the Vikings with its trademark defense.

“We got off to a great start,” MSU-N head coach Chris Mouat said. “The first 12 minutes of the game, we were really solid on the offensive end. I didn’t think we were nearly as good in the last eight minutes of the first half. We missed a lot of easy looks and we did not shoot well from the free-throw-line. So there are things we have to get cleaned up. But we did play really well defensively for 40 minutes, and I was pleased with the game overall.”

Northern’s quick started included an early 3-pointer by sophomore Natalee Faupel. She also sparked an 8-0 run with back-to-back threes, and that stretch gave the Skylights a 21-9 lead with 11:07 left in the first half. In all, Faupel drilled four triples in the first 20 minutes, while a Brandy Lambourne trey capped a 13-0 run by the Skylights.

On the defensive end, MSU-N was equally as good. The Skylights held the Vikings without a single point for over seven minutes, and when Faupel buried another trey, and Taylor Cummings went coast-to-coast for a layup, the Skylights strolled into halftime with a commanding 35-13 lead.

And Northern didn’t let up. The Skylights came out and put together another 10-0 run early in the second half, and with 9:04 to play, they were ahead 56-35. Northern was able to see every player that suited up for the game get action, and the MSU-N bench held the Vikings to just six more points the rest of the way.

“Defensively, we were very good for 40 minutes,” Mouat said. “The kids just continue to bring the defense every night, and it’s nice to see that kind of effort. I thought we also got a really good lift from our bench. No matter who was in the game, there wasn’t any kind of drop off in effort or production. So it was nice, because we had a lot of different kids step up and contribute tonight.”
Faupel poured in a game-high 21 points and hit five triples to lead MSU-N in the convincing win. Cummings also nailed a trey and scored 13 points, while dishing out six assists. Megan Feldman chipped in with nine points, and A’Jha Edwards scored eight and grabbed a game-high 10 boards. Lambourne scored five off the bench, while Jacy Thompson also hit a trey and scored five.

The Northern defense, which continues to lead the NAIA in scoring defense, held the Vikings to just 28 percent shooting and three 3-pointers. Northern also out-rebounded Valley City 38-29.

And the Skylights were extremely happy following their Black Friday win. Especially because it was just good to be back in the Armory, and knowing they won’t be home again until they open Frontier Conference play against Montana Tech Jan. 9.

“I’m pleased and proud of the effort tonight,” Mouat said. “It was the first time at home in a long time, and the kids were excited. It was a great crowd tonight and we’re thankful for that. And it was another good win for us, and another step in the right direction.”

The Skylights will return to the road with three games this weekend. Northern is in Oregon for games Thursday and Friday night and will travel to Walla Walla, Washington, for a game Saturday night.

Happy at Home

Skylights 69, Valley City 41

**VCSU** – Sierra Even 3-7 2-2 8, Saidqua Jilhad 4-11 0-4 8, Steph Pedersen 5-7 0-2 12, Megan Trautman 1-9 0-0 3, Alejandre Gonzalez 0-5 2-4 2, Paige Meyer 1-2 0-1 2, Lexi Lennon 1-6 0-0 3, Tracie Boehmlehn 1-7 0-0 3. Totals: 16-57 6-13 41.

**MSU-N** – Megan Feldman 4-7 0-1 9, A’Jha Edwards 4-6 -4 8, Jacy Thompson 2-4 0-0 5, Natalee Faupel 8-12 0-0 21, Taylor Cummings 6-8 0-0 13, Brandy Lambourne 1-1 1-2 5, Taryn Norby 0-1 0-0 0, Molly Kreycik 1-3 0-0 2, Makhayla Farmer 1-2 0-0 2, Cydney Auzenne 0-3 0-0 0, Taybra Teeters 2-5 0-0 4. Totals: 29-52 3-11 69.


MSU-Northern freshman Brandy Lambourne, left, looks to make a pass during Friday night’s game against Valley City.

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