Northern sweeps Orediggers
Lights win an overtime thriller at Montana Tech; Skylights cruise
By George Ferguson
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The Montana State University-Northern men’s and women’s basketball teams needed to find a way to win a big road game Saturday night in Butte. The Skylights needed a win to keep the momentum they built Thursday night at Lewis-Clark State going, while the Lights, they just needed to win.

And both did just that, as Northern swept the Montana Tech Orediggers.

The men’s game was an emotional roller coaster for the Lights, who were coming off a thumping at the hands of LC State Thursday night, and who had lost to Tech to open the Frontier season last month in Havre.

But, in a game of highs and lows, Northern found a way to pull off a 71-68 win over the Orediggers in front of a fired up crowd in Butte.

“So proud of our guys,” said Northern head coach and Montana Tech alum Shawn Huse. “It’s a long road trip, we have a bunch of guys who are sick, and now we come into a very tough place to play against a very good Montana Tech team after such a tough loss on Thursday night, it took a lot of heart and courage to come here and fight and get this win. I couldn’t more proud of this team.”

The Lights did have to fight to the bitter end, which included withstanding a pair of back-breaking 3-pointers from Tech seniors Antonio Snow and Adam Greger. Northern, which jumped all over Tech early, and led 33-20 at halftime, could only watch as the Now drilled a trey at the buzzer to send the game into overtime tied at 59-59.

In OT, it looked like the Lights had ran out of gas, as Tech raced out to a five-point lead early in the frame. But, a 3-pointer by Warren Edmonson and clutch free throws by Corbin Pearson pushed the Lights back in front by three with just :18 left. That’s when Greger rose up and knocked in a triple off of an offensive rebound, and the game was tied again. But in a final flurry, the Lights got a key stop, free throws from Pearson and Edmonson, and a miss by Greger at the horn to escape Butte with a big road win and a weekend split.

“For a minute, it looked like they (Orediggers) were going to take it away from us,” Huse said. “You have to give Tech a lot of credit for fighting back like they did. But once again, our guys showed tremendous poise and concentration at the foul line and on defense, at that turned out to be the difference.”

The Lights, playing their second straight game without senior starter Nick Blount, got a balanced effort offensively. Dylan Tatarka led the way with 15 points and seven rebounds, while Trevail scored 11 and Pearson added 10. Pearson went 8-of-10 from the foul line, while Edmonson scored nine and was a perfect 6-of-6 from the charity stripe. As a team, the Lights went an astounding 26-of-28 from the line, and got another eight points and two clutch three’s from senior Pat Jensen. Greger led all scorers with 28 points, as the Diggers ended up splitting with the Lights this season.
"It’s a big win for sure," Huse said. "Montana Tech is a quality basketball team, so this win shows us that we can be right there with everyone in our league. So I’m really proud of our guys, but at the same time, we have a long but at the same time, we have a long way to go. We have a lot of work left to do."

Skylights fend off Orediggers

It would have been quite easy for the Skylights to have an emotional letdown following Thursday night’s 20-point win at LC State. After all, the Skylights were up against a Tech squad on an eight-game losing streak, and in their gym, the Orediggers had nothing to lose.

But thanks to a complete first half, there was no letdown in No. 11 MSU-N’s 72-62 win Saturday night in Butte. In the first 20 minutes, the Skylights shot a scintillating 58 percent, on their way to a 38-26 halftime lead. And for the game, Northern shot 51 percent from the field, which helped the Skylights earn a season sweep of Tech.

"This could have been a major trap game for us," MSU-N head coach Chris Mouat said. "Given how we played in Lewiston, we could have had a big letdown tonight. But our kids didn’t allow that. They moved past the win over LC and came in here focused and with a tremendous amount of respect for Montana Tech. So I’m extra proud of our kids for that.

"We just got off to a great start tonight," he added. "We shot the ball so well in the first half, and that allowed us to open a nice lead. And then we were able to just hang in there in the second half."

Early 3-pointers by sophomore Molly Kreycik, and the inside play of A’Jha Edwards got Northern rolling, while sophomore Taryn Norby hit a shot at the buzzer to send MSU-N into the break with a 12-point cushion.

The Orediggers, who have yet to win a game in league play, battled hard in the second half, but Northern stayed strong. Senior Taylor Cummings made some big shots for the Skylights in the second stanza, while Edwards was unstoppable in the post. By game’s end, she finished with a game-high 22 points and 15 rebounds, her 18th double-double of the season. Cummings added 18 points and two 3-pointers, while Kreycik, starting the absence of Jacy Thompson, added 13 points and three triples.

The win at Tech was Northern’s second straight, after losing two in a row. The Skylights are now 7-2 in the Frontier Conference and a stellar 22-3 overall. And perhaps just as important, this weekend’s road sweep gave Northern its third and fourth road wins in conference play.

“Tech’s playing really well right now, they are a very talented team," Mouat said. "So for us to get out of here with a 10-point, it feels like a lot more. We just got a great all-around effort from our kids tonight. A lot of different kids stepped up and made big shots. So this was a very good road win for us."

The Lights and Skylights will return home for their last two-game home stand of the regular season. Northern hosts Rocky Mountain College on Friday night and Carroll College on Saturday night inside the Armory Gymnasium.

Skylights 72, Montana Tech 62

MSU-N – Natalee Faupel 3-6 1-3, Taylor Cummings 7-14 2-3 18, Megan Feldman 2-4 1-2 5, Taryn Norby 1-1 0-0 2, Molly Kreycik 3-10 4-4 13, A’Jha Edwards 9-13 4-4 22, Makhayla Farmer 0-1 0-0 0, Taybra Teeters 2-8 0-0 4. Totals: 27-57 12-15 72.

Halftime: Northern 38-26. 3-pointers: MSU-N 6-13 (Faupel 1, Cummings 2, Kreycik 3,); Rebounds: MSU-N 29 (Edwards 15); Fouls: 15; Fouled out: None.
Lights 71, Montana Tech 68 OT

**MSU-N** – Trevail Lee 4-11 3-3 13, Jermaine Graves 2-3 0-0 5, Corbin Pearson 1-7 8-10 11, Warren Edmonson 1-4 6-6 9, Dylan Tatarka 5-10 3-3 15, Brett Thompson 0-2 0-0 0, Damian Robinson 1-1 0-0 2, Pat Jensen 2-3 2-2 8, KJ Rech 2-4 4-4 8. Totals: 18-45 26-28 71.

Halftime: Northern 33-20. 3-pointers: MSU-N 9-22 (Lee 2, Graves 1, Pearson 1, Edmonson 1, Tatarka 2, Jensen 2); Rebounds: MSU-N 34 (Tatarka 7); Fouls: 22; Fouled out: Rech.

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