At the end of January, the Montana State University-Northern women’s basketball team walked out of the McLaughlin Center having suffered their worst loss of the season at the hands of the Great Falls Argos.

Fast forward one month to Saturday night, inside an emotionally charged, sold-out Armory Gymnasium, and the Skylights got their payback.

On senior night at MSU-N Saturday night, No. 10 Northern belted the No. 24 Argos 75-60 in a game that was never as close as the final score indicated. The win gave Northern an outstanding second-place finish in the Frontier Conference with a sparkling 11-3 record. The Skylights will be the No. 2 seed in the upcoming Frontier playoffs, and are a virtual lock for at least an at-large berth to the NAIA national tournament in two weeks.

But more important than all that, Northern head coach Chris Mouat was just excited about the way his team played against the powerful Argos, and about how the Skylights finished the season. Since that Jan. 30 loss to the Argos, Northern went 6-1 the rest of the way.

“UGF owned us in every phase of the game when we played them in Great Falls,” Mouat said. “And our kids were very aware of that. They saw it on film all this week. We made a few adjustments for this game and the kids bought into those adjustments and they did a really nice job of executing what we wanted to do tonight.

“Our backs were against the wall after that loss (in Great Falls),” Mouat continued. “So to go out and win five in a row after that, to play as well as we have down the stretch, against the teams in this league, that’s really tough to do, and it’s a testament to how hard these kids work. I’m really proud of them for that.”

And the Skylights should be proud of the way they played against the Argos Saturday night.

The first five minutes of the season finale were tight, but when senior Megan Feldman scored on a layup and was fouled, giving her an old-fashioned 3-point play, the Skylights used that to go on a 13-2 run — a run that also included eight points from senior A’Jha Edwards. MSU-N also closed out the first half with eight straight points, including buckets from Edwards, Feldman and senior Taybra Teeters. That run sent MSU-N into the locker room with a 33-21 halftime lead.

“UGF came out hot,” Mouat said. “A lot like they did in Great Falls. But, we played much better tonight defensively, and we were very good on the boards. UGF is a great rebounding team, but we didn’t allow them second chances. We focused on being better defensively and on the boards all week, and that was a big difference in this game.”

Northern was stellar defensively. The Skylights held the Argos to a season-low 29 percent shooting, and they held the Frontier’s leading scorer, Erin Legel, to just 11 points on 4-of-17 shooting.
“Because of our loss to them (Argos) earlier in the season, we were really motivated and focused,” said MSU-N senior Taylor Cummings. “So as emotional a night as this was, we put all of that into the game first, and that helped us play a lot better. We were focused on the game, and then the emotional stuff of senior night came after, and that really worked for us.”

And it kept working. Northern opened the second half on a 15-4 run, and Cummings and Molly Kreycik would combine for four 3-pointers in the first 10 minutes, as the Skylights put the Argos away for good.

Northern wound up with four players in double figures, led by Edwards’ 21st double-double of the season. She scored 20 points and yanked down 13 rebounds, while Natalee Faupel added 18 points and Cummings scored 16 points while dishing out eight assists. Kreycik added 10 points and Feldman chipped in with nine, while the MSU-N defense allowed just one double-digit scorer. UGF got 20 points and 12 rebounds from senior Lindsey Abramson as the Argos fell to 8-6 in league play and wound up finishing in fourth place.

Meanwhile, the Skylights already had second locked up, as well as a home semifinal game in the Frontier playoffs, which will be Friday night in the Armory Gymnasium. But even with their fate already decided, the Skylights weren’t going to let the Argos spoil an exciting and emotional senior night in the Armory.

“The kids just played really well,” Mouat said. “UGF is very explosive, they’re very good, and we knew that. So credit our kids for being as focused as they were and for coming out and taking control of things on the defensive end and on the boards. That, and the fact that we were so balanced offensively tonight, that was a big difference for us.”

Northern will now prepare to host either Carroll College, UGF or Lewis-Clark State in a Frontier semifinal Friday night in Havre. That game will tip off at 7 p.m. The first round of the Frontier playoffs will be Tuesday when the Argos host LC State and Carroll hosts Montana Tech.

**Skylights 75, UGF 60**

**UGF** – Stephanie McDonagh 2-9 0-0 5, Darrah Huertas-Vining 1-11 4-4 6, Kendalyn Brainard 4-8 0-0 8, Lindsey Abramson 5-14 10-10 20, Erin Legel 4-17 0-0 11, Mackenzie Owens 1-4 0-0 2, Nneka Nnadi 2-5 4-4 8. Totals: 19-68 18-18 60.

**MSU-N** – Megan Feldman 4-8 1-1 9, Taybra Teeters 1-2 0-0 2, A’Jha Edwards 8-13 4-4 20, Natalee Faupel 7-14 4-4 18, Taylor Cummings 5-7 4-4 16, Brandy Lambourne 0-1 0-0 0, Taryn Norby 0-0 0-0 0, Molly Kreycik 3-4 2-2 10, Makhayla Farmer 0-0 0-0 0, Cydney Auzenne 0-1 0-0 0. Totals: 28-50 15-15 75.

Halftime: Northern 33-21. 3-pointers: UGF 4-10 (McDonagh 1, Legel 3), MSU-N 4-8 (Cummings 2, Kreycik 2); Rebounds: UGF 21 (Abramson 12), MSU-N 39 (Edwards 13); Fouls: UGF 14, MSU-N 13; Fouled out: None.