If Monday night's Frontier Conference women's championship game was the last game the Westminster Griffins ever play in the league, then the Montana State University-Northern Skylights made sure the Griffins' swan song wasn't going to be easy.

In the Frontier title bout in Salt Lake City, the Skylights pushed the now four-time defending champion Griffins to their very limit. But in the end, and in spite of a last-second 3-pointer by Northern freshman Jacy Thompson, the No. 4 Griffins prevailed over the No. 10 Skylights, 62-61.

The loss in Salt Lake was Northern's third to the Griffins this season, but it was just MSU-N's fifth loss overall. And though head coach Chris Mouat said his team was very disappointed after the close call, he was also extremely proud of what the Skylights, who will go on to next week's NAIA national tournament, did Monday night and have done this season.

"It's been an incredible run, and I'm very proud of this team," Mouat said. "Every time we've suffered a loss or a setback this season, we've bounced back. And that speaks to the character of these kids. And every time we got down tonight, we battled back. They're really disappointed right now. But I'm very proud of them."

The Skylights did have to battle from behind all night, and they battled hard. Northern quickly fell behind via a 6-0 Griffin run, but inside buckets by A'Jha Edwards helped the Skylights stay within range of the powerful Griffins, at 36-29 at halftime.

The Griffins then went on yet another run to start the second half, and the Skylights trailed by as much as 12 points with just over 12 minutes left. However, Taylor Cummings knocked in a triple, and Edwards surprised the staunch Griffin defense, which allows just 46 points per game, by nailing two straight three's, in what became an 11-0 Northern run. And by the time the run was over, the Skylights were down just 52-50 with over five minutes left in the game.

"Westminster had us by throat, several times," Mouat said. "Being behind by 12 against them feels more like 20. But our kids continually battled back, and they battled through foul trouble and a lot of adversity tonight, in order to give ourselves a chance at the end."

The Skylights did indeed have a chance to claim their first conference championship in 17 years, but the Griffins turned them away. Westminster went on a quick 6-0 run to go back ahead 58-50, and during that stretch, Edwards, who had another remarkable game, fouled out. Northern did get two Thompson 3-pointers in the final minute, but the Griffins made their free throws to barely stay ahead of the Skylights, and win their fourth Frontier postseason title in the last five years.
"The game just got away from us one too many times," Mouat said. "Westminster is so tough and so physical, and they defend so well, and in both halves, it just got away from us. We missed a few too many shots tonight when we really needed them, and yet we still had chances down the stretch. So that speaks to the fight in our kids."

Edwards finished with a game-high 22 points and 10 rebounds, while Cummings had 15 points and five assists, while going 8-of-9 from the foul line. Natalee Faupel also scored 10 for the Skylights, while Westminster (25-2), which earned the Frontier’s automatic bid to the national tournament, got 16 points from Tia Pappas and 13 from Amy Krommenhoek.

And despite the disappointment of losing the championship game, the Skylights (27-5) are moving on to the national tournament for the second straight year. When the field of 32 is announced Wednesday night, there's no doubt MSU-N's name will be called, and that's something Mouat is very proud of his team for achieving.

"The kids will be very excited for the opportunity to go and represent our conference at the national tournament," Mouat said. "This was a tough one tonight, because we had our chances against a very good Westminster team on their home floor. But we'll see who we draw Wednesday night, and then we have to bounce back from a loss like we have done all season long."

The field for the NAIA national women's tournament, which runs March 18-24 in Independence, Missouri, will be announced live on NAIA.org Wednesday night at 6 p.m.

**Westminster 62, Skylights 61**

**MSU-N** – Natalee Faupel 4-10 2-3 10, Taylor Cummings 3-8 8-9 15, Megan Feldman 2-7 2-4 6, Molly Kreycik 0-3 0-0 0, A'Jha Edwards 7-16 6-8 22, Jacy Thompson 2-6 0-0 3, Taryn Norby 0-1 0-0 0, Taybra Teeters 1-2 0-0 2. Totals: 19-53 18-24 61.

**WC** – Shelby Ellsworth 3-7 2-7 8, Amy Krommenhoek 4-10 4-8 13, Tia Pappas 6-9 3-3 16, Amanda Hacking 3-6 0-0 6, Jessica Sorensen 0-1 0-0 0, Kayla Richens 0-1 1-4 1, Rachel Blazzard 0-0 0-0 0, Mikina Pinner 4-6 0-0 10. Totals: 23-46 10-22 62.

Halftime: Westminster 36-29. 3-pointers: MSU-N 5-13 (Cummings 1, Edwards 2, Thompson 2), WC 6-11 (Krommenhoek 1, Pappas 1, Winters 2, Pinner 2); Rebounds: MSU-N 35 (Edwards 14), WC 28 (Pinner 7); Fouls: MSU-N 23, WC 18; Fouled out: Edwards, Kreycik.

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