

Lights place seven in Spokane

George Ferguson, Havre Daily News sports editor

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The Montana State University-Northern wrestling team is going through a grinder right now.

And two days after the No. 7 Lights lost a hard-fought dual to No. 1 Southern Oregon Friday night in Havre, they were on the road again, competing at the Spokane Valley Open on Sunday.

Individually, Northern had a solid day in Spokane, placing seven wrestlers overall. In a tournament which featured tough squads like SOU and UGF, the Lights got a pair of first-place finishes, led by senior Evan Hinebauch at 197 pounds. The No.1-ranked Hinebauch went undefeated in Spokane, including beating UGF's Kameron Jackson 6-3 in the finals. Hinebauch is still unbeaten on the season.

Another great finish was turned in by sophomore Jared Miller at 174 pounds. Miller captured his first tournament title as a Light and he had to beat teammate Max Payne in the semifinals to do it. Payne wound up finishing third for the Lights at 174.

"Jared Miller and Evan Hinebauch wrestled lights out," Northern head coach Tyson Thivierge said. "Jared had to get by teammate Max Payne to make the finals and Evan ran a gauntlet to win. That is likely the last time Evan will be competing at a tournament at 197, as he is on his way down to compete once again at 184. Jared also found his focus again winning this tournament."

The Lights also got three wrestlers wins in fifth-place matches. Kody Reed took fifth at 184 pounds, Nick King took fifth at heavyweight and Willy Miller placed fifth at 174 pounds wrestling unattached. Freshman Riley Miller placed sixth at 125 pounds. The sixth-place finish got Miller qualified for the national tournament - the Lights have now qualified eight wrestlers for nationals.

"I don't think we wrestled very well at this tournament," Thivierge said. "It has been a grind so far this early season, but we have to step up to every challenge presented to us. We now have a few days off for break and we are looking for these guys to regain their focus for the remainder of this term."

The Lights are back on the mat for three duals Dec. 2 in Havre.