Thriller: Argos stop MSU-N comeback
MSU-N/UGF dual turns into a wild and dramatic finish
By George Ferguson
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It seems every time the Montana State University-Northern Lights and UGF Argos hook up on the wrestling mat, there’s high drama. And lately, it seems like the Lights find themselves mounting a late comeback charge in their own gym.

But for the first time in six meetings, the Argos made sure there was no storybook ending for the Lights.

Thursday night, inside a rowdy Armory Gymnasium, UGF snapped a five-match losing streak to Northern by holding off a dramatic Lights’ comeback in the final match. Dylan Lemery’s decision over Northern’s Jorrell Jones in the heavyweight match secured a 28-21 win for the No. 3 Argos over the fifth-ranked Lights.

Both teams had great moments Thursday night, like UGF storming out to a 25-0 lead through 157 pounds, and Northern storming back to have a chance to win the dual when it was all said and done. But, despite the usual drama and intensity of the Northern/UGF rivalry, neither head coach was all too pleased when the dust settled on the first dual of the 2014-15 season.

“They (Argos) were just better prepared than we were,” said Northern head coach Tyson Thivierge. “I’ve always said this dual is about momentum, and they came out and punched us right in the mouth, and all of a sudden, we’re having to dig out of a huge hole. We gave up three pins in a row, and just really dug ourselves a gigantic hole, and you can’t do that against a team like UGF. They were just better prepared than we were tonight, and they got the ball rolling on us.

“It’s not good enough to win, we gave up too many pins,” said UGF head coach Caleb Schaeffer. “We were in dominant fashion of that dual. I know they have horses up above with Hinebauch, I expect him to go out and rip our head off, but we can’t give up pins against Willie Miller and DeMers, that’s flat out unacceptable, and I’m going to make sure my guys know that.”

And that’s the way it went for both the Lights and Argos. Huge momentum swings and a lot of pins. But for Northern, it was just a little too much to overcome.

The Argos got a 4-2 decision by 125-pounder Luke Schlosser to get things started. But after that match, things really went awry for the Lights. Justin Rodgers was pinned by Jared Berlinger at 133, and Rainier Montes only lasted 14 seconds against third-ranked Michael Ruiz at 141 pounds. Then, third-ranked Ryan Martin made short work of Drew Randall at 149 pounds. Randall suffered a shoulder injury, but kept going, only to be pinned by Martin in the first period. The three straight pins gave UGF a 21-0 lead, and third-ranked Chad Cebulski made it 25-0 when he dissected Northern’s Tommy Cooper in what was billed as one of the most important matches of the night, the 157-pound bout. Cebulski was the aggressor from start to
finish, and he wound up with a 9-2 decision, and at that point, it looked like the Lights were left with no chance.

“That injury hurt us, I should have just taken him out and defaulted at that point,” Thivierge said. “That’s on me. But, our lighter weights just didn’t wrestle like we thought they would. UGF is really strong there, and they took it to us in those matches, but we have to be better than that. We can’t go out and give up three straight pins in a dual like this.

“Our lighter guys are where our team is at,” Schaeffer added. “Our bigger guys have to figure it out, and we have to go back to the drawing board ‘cause that is not good enough. If we want to be national title contenders, which we want to, we have to put a statement on that dual.”

Northern’s lighter weights, which included four grapplers competing in their first MSU-N/UGF dual did struggle against the powerful UGF lineup. But, everyone in the building also knew Northern’s big guns were up next, and they didn’t disappoint.

MSU-N needed pins, and Hinebauch got that ball rolling with a second-period pin at 165 pounds. Then came another of the pivotal matches of the night, and though second-ranked Jared Miller didn’t get a pin, he technically took apart fifth-ranked Shawn Lau, winning a 9-4 decision that kept the Lights’ comeback train moving.

But, at that point, pins were the only way the Lights could come all the way back, and at 184 and 197 pounds, they got them. Miller, a former Chinook star, making his home debut for the Lights, pinned Brock Picard at 184 pounds, while DeMers came out and quickly put away Andreas Geranois in the 197-pound match.

DeMers’ pin gave Northern hope, as the Lights trailed just 25-21 when Jones and Lemery took the mat. And while Jones fought hard, Lemery was just too solid, and he was able to ice UGF’s first win over the Lights in its last six tries.

“We have great leadership on this team,” Thivierge said. “And those guys went out and wrestled exactly how I thought they would. They are great in those situations, they knew we needed bonus points and they went out and got them. Those were really big wins for Jared Miller and Willie Miller. All four of those guys led us like I thought they would. They gave us a chance.

“But again, in a dual like this, it shouldn’t have been put all on their shoulders,” he continued. “We just put ourselves in too big of a hole. I was proud of the way we tried to fight back. But you just can’t get that far behind like we did tonight.

“It went back and forth,” Schaeffer added. “What did you guys think was going to happen in this gym, why would you expect a blowout, 25-0? Why wouldn’t they (Lights) come back at any time or any year that we wrestle? We knew it wasn’t going to be any different.”

Indeed. The night turned out to be not much different than any of the other historic duals between the two NAIA powerhouses. But for the Lights, there was a difference, they were on the losing end of the final score against their bitter rivals for the first time in three seasons, and they just couldn’t complete the magical comeback that everyone was so riled up over as the dual progressed.

“It was a hell of an effort by our guys to almost get out of that hole,” Thivierge said. “And give them (Argos) credit for coming in here and wrestling as well as they did right off the bat. It pretty much went like I thought it would. I thought it would be close. And it is
disappointing not to win, but what can you do? All we can do is dust ourselves off and get ready for the next dual. We just have to go right back to work and put this one behind us.”

The Lights will have no time to really think about the Argos anyway. Northern is right back on the mat tonight with duals against NJCAA powers North Idaho and Northwest College (see related story). The action starts tonight at 5 inside the Armory Gymnasium.

Close Again

**UGF 28, Lights 21**

125 – Luke Schlosser, UGF dec. Riley Miller, MSU-N, 4-2;
133 – Jared Berlinger, UGF pinned Justin Rodgers, MSU-N, 4:49;
141 – Michael Ruiz, UGF pinned Rainier Montes, MSU-N, :14;
149 – Ryan Martin, UGF pinned Drew Randall, MSU-N, :49;
157 – Chad Cebulski, UGF dec. Tommy Cooper, MSU-N, 9-2;
165 – Ethan Hinebauch, MSU-N pinned Billy Goforth, UGF, 3:47;
174 – Jared Miller, MSU-N dec. Shawn Lau, UGF, 9-4;
184 – Willie Miller, MSU-N pinned Brock Picard, UGF, 1:15;
197 – Garrett DeMers, MSU-N pinned Andreas Geranios, UGF, 1:11;