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GRIZZLY GAME DAY

Missoulian



FAMILY MATTERS

Ryan Tirrell adds
to legacy of Griz
First Family

BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

ROSTERS, PAGE 2 • Q&A WITH FS CHRISHAWN GORDON, PAGE 4 • SPELTZ PICKS THE BIG SKY, PAGE 5



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MONTANA ROSTER

No.	Name	Year	Pos.	Hgt.	Wt.	Hometown	23	Beau Dantic	R-So.	RB	5-9	192	Laurel, Mont.	62	Everett Johnson	R-Jr.	OL	6-7	301	Turlock, Calif.
0	Monte Gillman	Fr.	ATH	5-8	153	Dassel, Minn.	24	Cameron Gurnsey	R-Fr.	WR	6-0	181	Butte, Mont.	63	Dylan Cohen	R-Fr.	OL	6-1	267	Seattle, Wash.
0	Vai Kaho	R-Sr.	LB	6-1	235	Reno, Nev.	25	Jaxon Lee	Sr.	S	6-1	210	Missoula, Mont.	64	Matt Hilden	Fr.	OL	6-6	278	Santa Rosa, Calif.
2	Drew Deck	R-Jr.	WR	5-9	160	Kalispell, Mont.	26	Nick Ostmo	Gr.	RB	6-0	221	Portland, Ore.	66	Brandon Casey	Sr.	OL	6-5	309	Sandpoint, Idaho
2	Ronald Jackson Jr.	R-Jr.	CB	6-1	191	Detroit, Mich.	27	Jordan Dever	R-Fr.	WR	6-0	170	Spokane, Wash.	68	Torin Jeske	Fr.	OL	6-6	253	Bozeman, Mont.
3	Brooks Davis	Fr.	WR	6-0	168	Brentwood, Calif.	28	Isiah Childs	Sr.	LB	6-1	209	Manhattan, Kan.	69	Noah Kaschmitter	R-Jr.	DL	6-3	253	Grangeville, Idaho
4	Dane Parker	Fr.	S	6-1	178	Puyallup, Wash.	29	Tanner Huff	R-Jr.	CB	6-0	207	Butte, Mont.	69	Cannon Panfiloff	R-Jr.	OL	6-6	293	Roy, Utah
4	Ryan Simpson	R-Sr.	WR	6-6	209	Bozeman, Mont.	30	Kade Cutler	R-So.	S	6-0	203	Phillipsburg, Mont.	70	Colin Amick	Fr.	OT	6-6	264	Sammamish, Wash.
5	Junior Bergen	Sr.	WR	5-11	184	Billings, Mont.	30	Tommy Running Rabbit	Fr.	ATH	6-1	202	Browning, Mont.	72	Cade Klimczak	Sr.	OL	6-1	286	Rockford, Mich.
6	Prince Ford	R-Jr.	CB	5-11	170	Concord, N.C.	31	Geno Leonard	R-Jr.	LB	5-11	231	Missoula, Mont.	73	Trevor Steinbach	Fr.	OL	6-5	290	Sammamish, Wash.
6	Keelan White	R-Sr.	WR	6-2	184	North Vancouver, B.C.	32	Tyson Rostad	R-So.	S	6-1	201	Hamilton, Mont.	74	Tate Templeton	R-Fr.	OL	6-3	298	Missoula, Mont.
7	Malae Fonoti	Fr.	RB	5-11	200	Palolo Valley, Hawaii	33	Lekeldrick Bridges	Fr.	WR	5-11	162	Cedar Hill, Texas	75	Declan McCabe	R-Jr.	OL	6-4	295	Waco, Texas
7	Kash Goicoechea	Fr.	S	6-1	194	Kalispell, Mont.	34	Talen Reynolds	Fr.	RB	5-11	161	Missoula, Mont.	76	Journey Grimsrud	R-Jr.	OL	6-3	302	Huntley, Mont.
8	Keali'i Ah Yat	R-Fr.	QB	6-1	192	Kaneohe, Hawaii	35	Grady Walker	Fr.	ATH	6-4	202	Missoula, Mont.	77	Michael Ray	R-So.	OL	6-3	289	Yakima, Wash.
8	Kenzel Lawler	R-Jr.	CB	6-0	190	Corona, Calif.	36	Ty Morrison	Jr.	KP	6-3	210	Valencia, Calif.	78	Lucas Freitas	R-Fr.	OL	6-6	312	Snoqualmie, Wash.
9	Chrishawn Gordon	R-Sr.	S	5-11	191	Oceanside, Calif.	36	Garrett Speer	Fr.	DB	6-0	187	Portland, Ore.	79	Liam Brown	R-Jr.	OL	6-5	317	Beaverton, Ore.
9	Sawyer Racanelli	R-Sr.	WR	6-3	208	Brush Prairie, Wash.	37	Trevin Gradney	R-Sr.	CB	6-0	184	Billings, Mont.	80	Brady Lang	R-Jr.	WR	6-1	179	Bozeman, Mont.
10	Eli Gillman	R-So.	RB	6-0	208	Dassel, Minn.	38	Marcus Evans	R-So.	LB	6-0	221	Helena, Mont.	81	Joseph Grezmak	R-So.	TE	6-5	241	Pilot Mountain, N.C.
10	TJ Rausch	R-Jr.	S	6-3	205	Missoula, Mont.	39	Jace Kluczewich	R-Jr.	S	5-10	166	Frenchtown, Mont.	82	Ian Finch	R-So.	WR	6-3	204	Missoula, Mont.
11	Cole Grossman	R-Sr.	TE	6-4	220	Vancouver, Wash.	40	Cooper Barnum	Sr.	LB	6-2	225	Vancouver, Wash.	83	Drew Klumph	R-So.	WR	5-11	181	Missoula, Mont.
11	Gabe Longin	R-Jr.	S	5-11	184	Great Falls, Mont.	41	Brayton Boyer	R-Fr.	KP	5-11	179	Madison, N.J.	84	Evan Shafer	Sr.	TE	6-5	273	Connersville, Ind.
12	Elijah Brady	R-Fr.	CB	6-1	165	Seattle, Wash.	42	Riley Wilson	R-Jr.	LB	6-2	230	Prosper, Texas	85	Dayton Toney	R-Jr.	WR	6-1	191	Frisco, Texas
12	Logan Fife	R-Jr.	QB	6-0	205	Tracy, Calif.	43	Grayson Pibal	R-Jr.	LS	6-3	197	Clackamas, Ore.	86	Joe Weida	R-So.	TE	6-4	230	Missoula, Mont.
13	Xavier Harris	Sr.	RB	5-10	173	Oxnard, Calif.	44	Ryan Tirrell	R-Sr.	LB	6-2	235	Missoula, Mont.	87	Jake Olson	R-Jr.	TE	6-7	258	Butte, Mont.
13	Ryder Meyer	R-Sr.	S	5-10	185	Fairfield, Mont.	45	Caleb Otlewski	R-Fr.	LB	6-4	235	Melissa, Texas	88	Erik Barker	Sr.	TE	6-4	240	Keizer, Ore.
14	Aaron Fontes	Sr.	WR	6-1	170	Oxnard, Calif.	46	Jo Silver	Jr.	KP	6-0	203	Fremont, Ohio	89	Danny Simon	Fr.	TE	6-6	240	Missoula, Mont.
14	Kyon Loud	Fr.	CB	6-2	172	San Mateo, Calif.	47	Kellen Detrick	R-Jr.	DL	6-3	235	Havre, Mont.	90	Jared Ramos	R-So.	DL	6-4	285	Centennial, Colo.
15	Retired in Honor of Dave Dickenson						48	Hayden Harris	R-Sr.	DE	6-5	255	Mill Creek, Wash.	91	Jaxon Tucker	Fr.	DL	6-3	232	Billings, Mont.
16	Kaden Huot	R-So.	QB	6-4	210	Helena, Mont.	49	Isaac Keim	Fr.	TE	6-4	260	Kalispell, Mont.	92	RB Wilson V	Jr.	DL	6-4	241	Henderson, Nev.
16	Owen Reynolds	Fr.	S	6-0	182	Red Lodge, Mont.	50	Erich Osteen	R-Sr.	LB	6-2	216	Simi Valley, Calif.	93	Sloan McPherson	R-Jr.	DL	6-4	250	Savage, Mont.
17	Kade Boyd	R-Fr.	S	6-0	193	Billings, Mont.	51	Austin Buehler	R-Fr.	OL	6-5	270	Helena, Mont.	94	Brendan Murphy	R-Fr.	DL	6-2	228	Seattle, Wash.
17	Luke Flowers	Fr.	QB	6-1	187	Rigby, Idaho	52	Cy Stevenson	R-Fr.	LB	6-2	222	Libby, Mont.	95	Dylan Smith	R-Jr.	DL	6-4	248	Whitehall, Mont.
18	Sam Alford	R-So.	WR	6-3	186	Park City, Utah	53	Braunson Henriksen	R-So.	OL	6-5	280	Polson, Mont.	96	Henry Nuce	R-Jr.	DL	6-4	253	Kalispell, Mont.
18	Chase McGurran	R-So.	S	6-0	196	Helena, Mont.	54	Cooper Walton	R-So.	LB	6-1	230	Johnstown, Colo.	97	Grant Glasgow	R-So.	KP	6-1	194	Lawrence, Kan.
18	Cody Schweikert	Fr.	ATH	6-3	208	Columbia Falls, Mont.	55	Andres Lehrmann	R-Sr.	DE	6-2	246	Doral, Fla.	98	Tyson Simmons	Fr.	DE	6-3	252	Chandler, Ariz.
19	Padraig Lang	R-Jr.	S	6-1	189	Bozeman, Mont.	56	Garrett Hustadt	R-Sr.	LB	6-2	235	Omaha, Neb.	99	Matai Mata'aifa	R-Jr.	DL	6-1	231	Lahaina, Hawaii
19	Gage Sliter	R-Fr.	QB	6-1	189	Kalispell, Mont.	57	Jake Mason	R-Fr.	DL	6-2	256	Ferndale, Wash.	99	Pat Hayden	R-So.	DT	6-2	285	Deptford, N.J.
20	BJ Phillips	R-Jr.	WR	5-9	150	San Antonio, Texas	58	Clay Oven	R-Fr.	LB	6-2	211	Billings, Mont.	99						
21	Stevie Rocker Jr.	R-Jr.	RB	6-0	214	Tucson, Ariz.	59	Hayden Opitz	R-Fr.	LB	6-2	224	Helena, Mont.	99						
22	Retired in Honor of Terry Dillon						60	Dillon Botner	R-Sr.	OL	6-6	290	Whitefish, Mont.	99						

PORTLAND ROSTER

No.	Name	Year	Pos.	Hgt.	Wt.	Hometown	26	Brock Fleming	Fr.	LS	6-1	180	Bothell, W. Va.	61	Noah Julison	Fr.	OL	6-3	290	Happy Valley, Ore.
0	Jaylen Lynch	So.	WR	6-2	175	Murrieta, Calif.	27	Micah Avery	Fr.	RB	5-10	185	Antioch, Calif.	62	Sonny Aina	Fr.	DL	6-2	275	Oxnard, Calif.
1	William Haskell	Jr.	QB	6-4	200	Glendale, Ariz.	28	Ronan Gay	Jr.	DB	6-1	190	Canby, Ore.	63	Jayden Sandusky	Jr.	DL	6-1	265	Medford, Ore.
2	Branden Alvarez	Jr.	WR	5-11	180	Norco, Calif.	28	Andre Miller	Fr.	WR	6-0	180	Happy Valley, Ore.	64	Tristan Lewis	Fr.	OL	6-5	305	Eatonville, Wash.
2	Michael Hurst	So.	S	5-11	195	Bellflower, Calif.	30	Travis West	Sr.	WR	5-6	175	Portland, Ore.	65	Ben Kapelka	Fr.	OL	6-4	260	Vancouver, Wash.
3	Terence Loville	Jr.	WR	6-0	185	San Mateo, Calif.	31	J. Badolato-Birdsell	Jr.	RB	5-10	205	Camas, Wash.	66	Ethan Johnson	Fr.	OL	6-3	285	Portland, Ore.
3	Zach Wusstig	Fr.	DB	6-1	195	Jefferson, Ore.	31	Jaymason Willingham	Sr.	LB	6-1	235	Steilacoom, Wash.	70	Shaun Torgeson	Fr.	OL	6-4	290	Ventura, Calif.
4	Isaiah Green	Fr.	DB	6-1	180	Oxnard, Calif.	32	Jaden Eddy	Fr.	S	6-0	185	Temecula, Calif.	71	Braylon Cornell	So.	OL	6-6	285	West Linn, Ore.
4	Jazel Riley IV	Fr.	QB	6-1	210	Lakewood, Colo.	32	Eddy Schultz	Fr.	WR	6-1	195	Montgomery, Calif.	72	Pryce Roberts	Fr.	OL	6-5	300	Woodinville, Wash.
5	Gabe Downing	Fr.	QB	6-0	185	Olympia, Wash.	33	Brandon Bryant	Fr.	LB	6-0	215	Sammamish, Wash.	73	Gavin Miller	Sr.	OL	6-6	315	Bay Shore, N.Y.
5	Tyreece Shakir	Sr.	S	5-10	195	Murrieta, Calif.	34	Tony Johnson	Jr.	P	6-5	180	Valparaiso, Ind.	74	Pule Leatigaga	Fr.	OL	6-4	335	Seattle, Wash.
6	Cru Newman	Fr.	QB	6-0	185	Portland, Ore.	35	Anthony Lambeth	Fr.	WR	6-1	180	Portland, Ore.	75	Mylan Sockwell	Fr.	OL	6-2	310	Pasadena, Calif.
6	Ezriel Vasquez	Jr.	DB	5-11	190	Stockton, Calif.	36	Remy Doering	Fr.	S	6-1	185	Long Beach, Calif.	76	Pedro Timoteo	Jr.	OL	6-3	320	Anchorage, Alaska
7	CJ Jordan	Jr.	QB	6-2	220	Portland, Ore.	37	Marcus Angiuli	Fr.	WR	6-3	215	Sammamish, Wash.	77	Jakob Bolton	Jr.	OL	6-7	320	Long Beach, Calif.
7	Peyton Wing	So.	LB	6-0	225	Summer, Wash.	37	Pierce Walker	Fr.	DB	5-10	180	Keizer, Ore.	78	Richard Estrella	Sr.	OL	6-4	325	Eugene, Ore.
8	Daulton Beard	Fr.	WR	6-5	200	Santa Ynez, Calif.	38	Deon Cavit	Jr.	S	6-1	200	Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.	79	Isaac Perez	So.	OL	6-3	325	Corona, Calif.
8	Diontaye Moorman	Fr.	DB	6-0	185	Everett, Wash.	39	Carsten Mamari	Jr.	DB	5-9	180	Temecula, Calif.	80	Jayden Brannan	Jr.	DB	6-3	210	Portland, Ore.
9	Michael Montgomery	So.</td																		

Terrific Tirrell thrives

Missoula native grows into starting LB while coached by 2 uncles

FRANK GOGOLA
406 MT Sports

Ryan Tirrell has known his uncle, Bobby Hauck, as a football coach for a long time.

He was a wide-eyed youngster attending Montana football games when Hauck was coaching the Grizzlies to seven consecutive Big Sky Conference championships and three national title game appearances in the early 2000s.

Tirrell, now a standout linebacker as a senior at UM, helped add another Big Sky crown and trip to the chipper in 2023 while playing for both his childhood favorite team and his head coach uncle.

"It's been super fun," he said prior to Montana's senior day game against Portland State at 1 p.m. on Saturday in Washington-Grizzly Stadium. "It's been a professional relationship when we're playing football."

"I grew up around the program, so I kind of knew the intensity and the tempo and stuff like that. But definitely was still a shock coming in. It's a lot different than high school."

Playing at UM is a family affair for Tirrell. Bobby Hauck, who is the brother of Tirrell's mother, Katie Tirrell, is the winningest coach in Griz and Big Sky history. Tim Hauck, another uncle, is the co-defensive coordinator and won a Super Bowl as a coach after playing for the Griz and in the NFL.

Robby Hauck, Tirrell's cousin, became the Big Sky's all-time leading tackler at Montana in 2022 and currently is an assistant coach at Portland State. Tirrell has a more distant cousin in teammate Drew Klumph, whose grandmother is sisters with Ryan's



BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

Montana defensive lineman Henry Nuce (96) and Montana linebacker Ryan Tirrell (44) tackle Northern Arizona running back J'Wan Evans (25) during the college football game between Montana and Northern Arizona on Oct. 12 at Washington-Grizzly Stadium in Missoula. Tirrell is the nephew of Grizzlies head coach Bobby Hauck.

grandmother on his mother's side, according to Katie.

"It was super fun being able to play with Robby," Ryan said. "I really enjoyed that because we grew up playing backyard football together. Then playing for my uncles has been really fun because they're so knowledgeable. It's cool to get to see them coach us firsthand."

The football family Tirrell is a part of goes beyond just those he's played with and for while at Montana. His grandfather on his mother's side, Bob Hauck Sr., is a hall of fame high school football coach in Montana. Tom Hauck, Bob's brother, played at UM in

the early 1960s and later coached the Griz.

Tirrell's family history with the Griz increased his desire to play for his hometown team coming out of Loyola Sacred Heart High School. Yet, he never felt like there was massive pressure put on him because of that lineage.

"It's really cool thinking about how Robby, myself, my uncle Tim and my uncle Tom have all been through this program and played football," he said. "It's fun when we all share stories and stuff like that. It's never about a family legacy. It's about just doing what I love."

Ryan's father, Jason Tirrell,

played high school football at Red Lodge before he came to UM for school and joined the Sigma Chi Fraternity, like many Tirrells and Haucks had done before him. At one point there were about 15 cousins on Katie's side of the family attending UM around the same time, she said.

Jason got to know Bobby and Tim before meeting Katie in Missoula. He and Katie started a family and had three children. Ryan is the youngest behind brother Tommy and sister Kari. He had to fight to keep up with them and cousin Robby when playing sports, helping drive him to where he is now.

"It's fun when we all share stories and stuff like that. It's never about a family legacy. It's about just doing what I love."

Montana linebacker Ryan Tirrell on his family history with the Griz

"Watching Ryan play for the Griz has been a huge blessing," Katie said. "It has brought so much joy to our family and friends. We have had a blast supporting the Griz our entire lives, but it has been extra special with Ryan playing for the Grizzlies with my brothers as his coaches."

"It's unique that his uncles are his coaches, and it's fun to see their bond because of that. They will treasure that for their entire lives."

Ryan attended Griz games with his parents while growing up, getting to watch his family members coach. Before games, he and the other kids would throw around the football at the tailgates. Afterward, they would go down on the field and sometimes visit the team in the locker room.

Ryan, his siblings and his cousins even had a song they sang in front of the team during the week leading up to the game against the Montana State Bobcats. The lyrics were simply their feelings about the in-state rival.

"Growing up with Bobby and Tim and surrounding himself with football coaches, he kind of fell into football at a young age," Jason said. "Ryan and his cousins, they were little guys and they'd go into that locker room and they just thoroughly enjoyed that. I think that's kind of where Ryan and all the kids got roped into this Griz Nation."

See TIRRELL, PAGE 7

Gordon having career year

California native excels at safety in first season after transferring to UM

FRANK GOGOLA
406 MT Sports

Montana safety Chrishawn Gordon got his first career interception in his 40th college game on Nov. 2 at Cal Poly.

The sixth-year senior from Oceanside, California, also tallied four tackles, the most since he had seven takedowns in each of the first two games this season. That performance came in his return from missing the previous game at Northern Colorado after he had started the first seven games this year.

Gordon has totaled 31 tackles, 2.5 tackles for loss, four pass breakups and one interception — all single-season career highs — through nine games in his first year at Montana. He had spent 2021-23 at Fresno State, accruing 39 tackles, two pass breakups, two TFLs, one sack and one safety in 28 games.

Gordon, who is listed at 5-foot-11 and 191 pounds, started his college career at Utah Tech (then Dixie State) in 2019, accumulating six tackles and two pass breakups while playing in four games and preserving his redshirt. He then moved to Butte College, a junior college in California, but the team didn't play in 2020 because of the pandemic.

Gordon sat down with 406 MT Sports prior to Montana's game against Portland State at 1 p.m. on Saturday in Washington-Grizzly Stadium. This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.

Q: Can you walk me through that interception and how it felt to get your first one?

A: "I was playing a flat and I kind of saw the quarterback running out on the boot, so I kind of



BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

Montana safety Chrishawn Gordon (9) lines up on the line of scrimmage during the college football game between Montana and UC Davis on Nov. 9 at Washington-Grizzly Stadium in Missoula. Gordon is in his first season at UM after previously playing at Fresno State.

knew there would be something behind me and something in front of me. Then I saw the quarterback getting ready to throw it, I was getting ready to make a tackle, but I saw that Jaxon (Lee) actually hit him.

"The ball floated a little too far, and I just saw the ball and I had to go get it. Once I caught it, I just felt so happy and I looked to the

sideline and I seen all my teammates, they were just so excited for me and we kind of just ran to the end zone and we took some pictures in the end zone. It was a good time."

Q: What has it been like working your way back in after missing a game?

A: "We have the mindset of next man up. They trust (Jace)

Klucewich and I trust Klucewich to get the job done. It's all about mindset, so whenever my number is called, I just got to go out there and be able to perform. My number was called, so I came out there and did what I had to do."

Q: How does playing safety in this 3-3-5 system compare to other defenses you've been in over the years?

A: "It's a little bit different because I came from a 4-2-5 and I played like an actual safety, where this is more of like a nickel-safety hybrid, so it's a little bit different. I'm able to play both nickel and safety in the past, so it works out me coming here and being able to play both. It's not too different, but it's interesting. I like it because it shows that I can play both positions."

Q: What has it been like learning from someone with so much NFL experience in safeties coach Tim Hauck?

A: "He's definitely a great coach to be around. He definitely has a lot of experience. He knows what it takes to get to the next level and what it takes to be successful at this level. I definitely appreciate having him as a coach and I just try to soak in all the information that he's able to provide and just see where he can take me and take our whole safety group."

Q: How did your journey go from Dixie State to JUCO to Fresno to Montana?

A: "Dixie State, it was one of my biggest offers out of high school. I didn't really get too many offers. I didn't have the grades to be able to go to any of the schools I really wanted to, so I took the offer, went there, started as a true freshman for a few games. Then I just knew that I'd be able to play at a different level, so I wanted to enter the transfer portal.

"COVID happened, so I ended up just taking classes at Butte College. I was there working out, never really had a season there, so I never got to play JUCO ball. I ended up getting an offer from Fresno State out of JUCO and then went to Fresno State and then had a blast over there and then graduated and decided to take my talents elsewhere, and then that's how I ended up here."

HOW WE SEE THE BIG SKY

406 MT Sports writers like Bobcats, Grizzlies to win Saturday

BILL SPELTZ
406 MT Sports

Welp, here we are with yet another home game for the Montana Grizzlies Saturday.

The Griz will total seven prior to their regular-season finale at Montana State next week. Montana's opponent this week, the Portland State Vikings, will only play four home games this season (they had five

scheduled but lost one due to a whooping cough situation).

I feel good for all the Griz players and fans and bad for Portland State's players. By the same token, maybe the Vikings would rather compete in front of a large crowd in Missoula than a tiny one in Hillsboro, Oregon.

In case you hadn't heard, Montana has a school-record eight home games next season. That's cool and all but I hope we're all striving for a level playing field here. No winner wants to be accused of having an unfair advantage.

Whether Saturday's Montana-Portland State game is played in Missoula or Oregon or northern Alaska, it's hard to imagine the Grizzlies losing. Just so much on the line for them and nothing but pride hanging in the balance for a Vikings program that is suffering through its ninth-straight losing season.

Portland State coach Bruce Barnum is in his 10th year at the helm. Back in 2015, he led his team to a 9-2 record, a top-10 ranking and the playoffs. He was named FCS National Coach of the Year and Big Sky Conference Coach of the Year.

Since then, there's not much to crow about. A win over the Grizzlies would make his season but Portland State just isn't good enough on defense to get it done.

The game of the week — actually the game of the season when it comes to the Big Sky Conference — will be played in

Davis, California, on Saturday night. It's a de facto championship game between the Aggies and Montana State Bobcats. All Big Sky fans will be interested in that one, including many in Missoula.

It feels like a toss-up, which makes it even more fun. Then a week from Saturday comes the Brawl of the Wild, which is always a hoot.

Here's a look at this Saturday's league games:

Portland State (2-4, 2-7) at No. 10 Montana (4-2, 7-3), 1 p.m. TV: Scripps Sports. The Vikings rank dead last in the Big Sky in points allowed per game. Actually it's not even close, with PSU surrendering an average of 44.4. To put that in perspective, Montana's sometimes-shaky defense allows roughly 20 fewer points per game on average. Portland State does have the ability to score a lot of points if the offense is clicking. The Vikings scored 58 in a win at Sac State two weeks ago and 30 in a home loss to Idaho last week. But that offense may not be clicking in front of a loud crowd at Washington-Grizzly Stadium. **Speltz:** Griz 38, Vikings 28. **Gogola:** Montana 38, Portland State 27. **Flores:** Griz 31, PSU 24.

No. 2 Montana State (6-0, 10-0) at No. 4 UC Davis (6-0, 9-1), 6 p.m. TV: Scripps Sports/ESPN+. The three 406 MT Sports football prognosticators had it all wrong last week in picking Montana to beat Davis. But hey, Vegas had it wrong too. The Aggies proved they're for real and now they have just one more giant hurdle to winning the Big Sky title: The undefeated Bobcats. To me the key to this game is whether or not Davis can contain Montana State's amazing running game. The Cats average 331 yards per game on the ground, which is more than 100 yards better than the next-best Big Sky rushing team. The Aggies allow just 3.6 yards per rush on average, which is tops in the league. But MSU quarterback Tommy Mellott is just going to be too tough for the Aggies to contain with his scrambling and passing. **Speltz:** Cats 35, Aggies 31. **Gogola:** Montana State 41, UC Davis 31. **Flores:** Cats 38, Davis 31.

No. 25 Northern Arizona (4-2, 6-4) at Northern Colorado (1-5, 1-9), noon. The surging Lumberjacks have won three in a row and are in position to earn a playoff



BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

Montana defensive end Hayden Harris (48) celebrates a stop during the Big Sky Conference football game between Montana and UC Davis last Saturday at Washington-Grizzly Stadium. The Griz will host Portland State this Saturday.

berth with a strong finish. They're actually tied with Montana and Idaho for third place in the Big Sky standings. Not many outside of Flagstaff expected that with two regular season games remaining. NAU probably won't have any trouble with a UNC team that's lost three in a row. Then next week the Jacks will have a lot riding on their final regular season home game against high-scoring Eastern Washington. **Speltz:** Jacks 37, Bears 14. **Gogola:** Northern Arizona 35, Northern Colorado 13. **Flores:** NAU 28, UNC 10.

Idaho State (3-3, 5-5) at Eastern Washington (2-4, 3-7), 2 p.m. This is a tough one. The Bengals are coming off a nice road win over rival Weber State. The Eagles steamrolled at Northern Colorado last week and seem to play everyone tough at home, including Montana and Montana State. I'm going with Eastern Washington to win on senior day, but I'm not real confident in my pick. Call it a hunch. **Speltz:** Eagles 40, Bengals 38. **Gogola:** Eastern Washington 45, Idaho State 42. **Flores:** EWU 42, ISU 38.

Sacramento State (1-5, 3-7) at Cal Poly (1-5, 2-7), 3 p.m. TV: ESPN+. In a matchup of teams tied for last in the league standings, I'll go with the Hornets. They at

least looked decent in October before falling on hard times. Cal Poly has lost five in a row and the last two weeks they've been beaten handily at home. **Speltz:** Hornets 38, Mustangs 28. **Gogola:** Sacramento State 34, Cal Poly 17. **Flores:** Cal Poly 20, Sac State 17.

Weber State (2-4, 3-7) at No. 8 Idaho (4-2, 7-3), 6 p.m. TV: ESPN+. The Vandals have won three in a row and they will improve their playoff draw with a pair of wins to end the regular season. That's more than enough incentive for them to beat the struggling Wildcats. Weber State has lost four in a row since beating Montana at Washington-Grizzly Stadium. The skid started with an inexplicable home setback against Northern Colorado on Oct. 12. The Wildcats have been erratic on offense. They scored 55 against Montana and 48 in a loss at Sac State. But they were held to six points in their most recent road game at NAU. They're hard to figure. **Speltz:** Vandals 37, Wildcats 27. **Gogola:** Idaho 31, Weber State 20. **Flores:** Idaho 27, Weber 9.

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Montana safety Chrishawn Gordon (9) looks on from the sideline during the Big Sky Conference football game between Eastern Washington and Montana on Sept. 28 at Roos Field in Cheney, Washington. Gordon got his first interception in his 40th career game earlier this season.

BEN ALLAN SMITH,
MISSOULIAN



Gordon

From 4

Q: How did your time go at Fresno?

A: "I loved it. I met some life-long friends over there. I still talk to those guys every single day. Just the environment, being able to play in big stadiums, go all over the country, so I definitely enjoyed my time there. It was a business decision I had to make and that's what led me here."

Q: How does Washington-Grizzly Stadium compare to Mountain West venues?

A: "This is better than most of the Mountain West stadiums. I could compare it to like a Boise, Wyoming was pretty exciting. So, it's definitely up there with the top stadiums in the Mountain West."

Q: You said business decision, so why were you looking to transfer?

A: "It just had a lot to do with

my relations with the coach that we had over there. I just wanted to see if I had a better chance of going to the next level somewhere else. So, I just decided it was my time to leave."

Q: How did recruiting go for you in the transfer portal?

A: "It was actually wild. I had a bunch of big schools hitting me up, like Indiana, Miami, Minnesota, FAU. But we weren't able to really make those work out. Montana had offered me and it was kind of a late decision, but I felt like Montana was the most genuine and I'd be able to come here and play right away."

"At a lot of those big schools, they can tell you you're going to come here and play, they can throw you a bunch of money but there's a lot of politics that goes with a lot of those big schools. So, I just felt the most comfortable with coming here. Actually (former defensive coordinator Ronnie) Bradford was the reason I came here and he

ended up leaving, but I'm happy coach Tim Hauck is here."

Q: So how has your time here gone compared to what you expected?

A: "It's fun. I've made a lot of good connections with the boys over here. Ryder Meyer, Jaxon Lee, they both recruited me here as well. They were reaching out to me, so they've become really good friends of mine, Jace Klucwich. I've just built a connection with everybody here."

"I didn't know what I thought it was going to be like here, but I always knew about the Montana environment and how the football team was. So, it's definitely looking up to what I thought it would be and I'm enjoying my time here."

Frank Gogola is the Senior Sports Reporter at the Missoulian and 406 MT Sports. Follow him on X @FrankGogola or email him at frank.gogola@406mstsports.com.

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f i g t X

Tirrell

From 3

"And here we are today. I can't believe that Ryan is a player and he starts and he's on the roster. It's like, wow. It's been real special. We just feel so blessed. We know that this doesn't happen very often. We're just lucky parents."

Ryan's love of football from attending those games led him to start playing Little Grizzly Football in fifth grade. He weighed too much to be a running back like he wanted, so he played on both sides of the line, Jason said. He moved to running back and linebacker during his freshman year of high school.

He began weight training with Rams coach Todd Hughes that year, became an all-state rusher as a senior, was a two-time all-state linebacker and earned four letters on the gridiron. He started on two state runner-up teams, losing to future Griz teammates Garrett Graves (Eureka) and Ryder Meyer (Fairfield).

He also won four letters on the track and three letters playing basketball, taking third place in the long jump at the state meet in the former. Not only was football his favorite sport, but it was also the one he felt he was best at.

"I've been coaching over 30 years and he's in the top three of my most favorite human beings on the planet," Hughes said. "He's a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful kid. Hard worker. Does everything the right way. Lives his life the right way on and off the field."

"His personality, he's one of those kids that any dad would let their daughter marry. He's a phenomenal kid. He's got a great sense of humor. He's kind. But you put him inside the

white lines, he's ferocious. His success, he hasn't even come close to his peak potential of what he's going to do in his lifetime."

Tirrell didn't feel that he had things handed to him on a silver platter at UM just because of his relation to the head coach. He had to work just like every other player on the roster to earn playing time.

He redshirted his first year and then played primarily on special teams in the COVID spring season and the next two fall seasons. It took until his fifth year before he got meaningful playing time at linebacker, starting in seven of 15 games. It wasn't until his sixth season that he became an every-game starter.

"I just have hard work engraved in me and a no-quit attitude," he said. "Quitting definitely wasn't an option and doing my best is the only option. Seeing the success of former players and just wanting to be one of those guys was probably the biggest thing."

Tirrell felt that he found a family atmosphere at Montana beyond just the literal family members he interacted with on a daily basis. He named nearly two handfuls of linebackers who helped him learn and grow over the years.

He played in his 50th career game and made his 17th career start this past week against UC Davis. He goes into the Week 12 game against Portland State leading the Griz and ranking seventh in the Big Sky in tackles.

He has spent all six years with Bobby Hauck being his head coach, two years with Tim Hauck assisting the defense and four years as teammates with Robby Hauck. Bobby had returned as the Griz head coach ahead of the 2018 season, Tirrell's senior year at Loyola, and

recruited him as part of the Class of 2019.

"Coaching my nephew, he's a kid I have seen grow up through his entire existence, and obviously having coached my son has a lot of similarities to that because we have a close and tight family," Bobby said. "I would hope that these guys on either side of me would tell you that I love them all equally."

"Ryan's done a really nice job growing from a guy who was not very worldly in football and just had to assimilate into the college game, into a guy that can be counted on by his teammates. I think that's probably (what) he would tell you is his greatest accomplishment."

Tirrell has already graduated with a bachelor's degree and is working on his Master of Business Administration. He's been a three-time Academic All-Big Sky selection and has an opportunity to make it 4-for-4 this season.

While football runs in his blood, he doesn't foresee college coaching in his future. He might still get into that side of the family business as he thinks he could find himself on a high school staff one day coaching his future children.

He'll have some lessons he's learned at UM to carry on for the rest of his life.

"If you're determined for a certain goal and you put your mind to it, it's very achievable if you want to put in the work," he said. "If you don't want to put in the work, you won't achieve that success that you're looking for. Just having grit and determination will take you a long way in life."

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BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

Montana linebacker Ryan Tirrell (44) tackles Northern Arizona wide receiver Isaiah Eastman (3) during the college football game between Montana and Northern Arizona on Oct. 12 at Washington-Grizzly Stadium in Missoula. Tirrell has played in 50 games and made 17 starts for the Grizzlies.

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A photograph of two people playing football at sunset. The sky is filled with warm orange and yellow clouds. The players are in silhouette, one on the left throwing a football and one on the right catching it. Bare tree branches are visible in the top right corner.

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