

UTAH TECH AT MONTANA • KICKOFF: 1 P.M. SATURDAY • TV: MTN • THURSDAY, SEPT. 10, 2026

GRIZZLY GAME DAY

Missoulian



GOLDEN FINCH

IAN FINCH PROUD TO REPRESENT HOMETOWN

BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

Q&A WITH WR LEKELDRICK BRIDGES, PAGE 3 • SPELTZ PICKS THE BIG SKY, PAGE 4 • ROSTERS, PAGE 5

WINNING MENTALITY

Missoula's Finch has prioritized team over self

FRANK GOGOLA
406 MT Sports

Ian Finch wasn't used to winning many football games at Missoula Hellgate High School.

The Knights' varsity team won a total of eight games during his four years in the program. Down the road with the Montana football team, he's played key roles as a special teams standout and contributing wide receiver in a program that has won at least eight games in each of his first four years.

Now in his final season, he's primed for his biggest role yet as the Grizzlies will be looking to improve to 3-0 when they host Big Sky Conference foe Utah Tech in a nonconference game at 1 p.m. Saturday in Washington-Grizzly Stadium.

"I've always wanted to win," Finch said. "I think coming here just showed me that it takes a lot more discipline to consistently win, whereas in high school maybe that wasn't as evident."

The Grizzlies expect to compete for championships, both in the Big Sky and on the FCS level. They won the conference title and finished as the national runner-up in 2023 during Finch's second season on the team.

They've accumulated 45 victories against 14 losses since he joined the team ahead of the 2022 season. Winning is the expectation, which Finch said was the same at Hellgate, which had some future college athletes but lacked numbers and the quality roster depth to win regularly.

"Coming in, the seniors really show you that this is a place that all they care about is winning," he said. "That comes down to your sleep, your nutrition, what you do outside of football, how you



BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

Montana wide receiver Ian Finch (5) tackles Eastern Washington returner Wesley Garrett (13) during the college football game on Nov. 8, 2025, at Washington-Grizzly Stadium in Missoula. Finch was named a co-recipient of the Hauck Family special teams player of the year award in 2025.

spend your time. It's not that I was bad at that in high school, but just continuing to do that and having to elevate your game because there's a lot more food on your plate."

The winning mentality began to click for Finch following his freshman season. He had spent that first year as a redshirt who practiced on the scout team.

He didn't get to play in any games that year. He also didn't get to travel to any road games, so he still hadn't felt as involved as he would later become.

"After that year, I really felt the culture and all that came with that," he said. "I learned that I'm capable of doing a lot of things at once, I can balance a lot of things pertaining to school, family, social life, football."

Head coach Bobby Kennedy has gained an appreciation for Finch since he has gotten to work with him. He's also seen a growth in Finch's work ethic, like how he still went full speed even while being banged up this fall camp.

Kennedy, who was promoted to head coach in February, was

hired as the wide receivers coach in August 2025. That's when he got to first know Finch, who had played in a Hellgate program that had records of 2-8, 3-6, 1-6 and 2-6.

"I think if they would have had 22 Finches they would have won more than eight games," Kennedy said. "He's got that mentality, but also, he's grown in this program. It's taken him a couple years, so kudos to him because he didn't shy away from it."

Finch has grown while playing for four wide receivers coaches

in his time at Montana. First was Brent Pease, who is now the offensive coordinator, during his freshman season in 2022. Then it was Bryce Erickson, who is no longer on staff, for two seasons.

Next was Kennedy, who coached him in 2025. Former Griz quarterback Dalton Sneed, an offensive assistant, coached the wide receivers this past spring before position coach Eric Price rejoined the team during the summer.



SHANNA MADISON, MISSOULIAN

Montana wide receiver Lekeldrick Bridges celebrates during the college football game against Southern Utah on Aug. 29 at Washington-Grizzly Stadium in Missoula. Bridges scored the game-winning touchdown.

Bridges enjoying bigger role

Texas native has become starting WR as a junior

CARSON CASHION
406 MT Sports

In Montana's season-opening win over Southern Utah, junior wide receiver Lekeldrick Bridges enjoyed a coming-out party of

sorts in the Grizzly offense.

Earning his first career start at wideout, Bridges scored the game-winning touchdown late in the fourth quarter that also served as his first career touchdown. The play capped off a five-catch, 91-yard (both team highs) performance for the Cedar Hill, Texas, native.

The moment garnered praise from UM head coach Bobby Kennedy, who served as Bridges' wide

receivers coach last season in Kennedy's first year on the Grizzlies' staff.

"To see him have that type of success, number one, I'm really proud of him," Kennedy said in his post-game press conference. "And trust me when I say this, it was nothing that I did. I think he made the decision, he wanted to be a good player here, and I think he's just scratched the tip of his potential.

"I'm really excited about the future with this guy and expect big things to come."

Bridges caught three balls in Montana's blowout win over Drake Saturday, totaling 19 yards.

Bridges sat down with 406 MT Sports ahead of Montana's home contest against Utah Tech at 1 p.m. Saturday. This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.

Q: What do you remember from your high school recruit-

ment process? How did Montana eventually get involved?

A: I had interest from (Texas) Tech, had offers from Toledo, Kent State, a few others. I don't know, they eventually just dropped them, and Montana called me. It was like, I think the middle of my senior year. They offered me, and I committed around my birthday week.

Please see **BRIDGES**, Page 7

HOW WE SEE THE BIG SKY

BILL SPELTZ
406 MT Sports

The past two Saturdays haven't been real pleasant for Big Sky Conference football newcomer Utah Tech.

First came the home debut debacle against top-ranked Montana State. The Cats were bigger, stronger and especially faster. The 54-0 outcome made me wonder if the NCAA needs to implement some sort of continuous clock rule like they have in the Montana high school ranks.

Last week was just as ugly, with the Trailblazers taking a 63-7 drubbing at FBS 14th-ranked BYU. It was like taking candy from a baby.

If you happened to be flipping back and forth between the MSU-Utah Tech game and the Montana-Southern Utah game two weeks ago, you probably noticed the difference in stadium lighting. Washington-Grizzly Stadium might have the best lighting in the FCS while Utah Tech's home stadium ... let's just say I felt bad for the players because the lights didn't seem to be much better than what I've seen covering Class B high school football.

Who even cares about stadium lighting in red-rock country? Probably not many around here, but it helps illuminate how much more established the Grizzlies are than the Trailblazers on the Division I level.

Utah Tech became an FCS team in the spring of 2021. The Trailblazers have made three conference jumps since then.

Originally a junior college program, UTU joined the NCAA at the Division II level in 2006 and played in the Great Northwest Athletic Conference from 2008 through 2016 and the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference for the 2017, 2018, and 2019 seasons. In 2020, the Trailblazers kickstarted the transition to NCAA Division I status.

Montana, in contrast, has been in NCAA Division I for football for 53 years. The Grizzlies have competed in the Big Sky Confer-

ence since the league was founded in 1963. They've won two FCS titles and reached the finals eight times.

If you find yourself wondering why the Grizzlies are so much better than the Trailblazers Saturday, try to keep in mind Utah Tech was playing in the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference seven years ago.

Here's a look at this week's games:

Utah Tech (0-2) at No. 3 Montana (2-0), 1 p.m. TV: The Spot-MTN. Call it one more warmup game for the Grizzlies before they make their bid to knock off a big boy, so to speak, at FBS Oregon State next week. The Trailblazers could stick with Montana a little while if the maroon and silver play undisciplined. No one really knows for sure right now how competitive Utah Tech could be because it has only faced the best of the FCS and a nationally ranked FBS team. It's worth noting UTU did earn home wins over Northern Iowa and North Alabama last year. Montana coach Bobby Kennedy will no doubt remind his team about those games in working to keep the Griz sharp. In the end, Montana will win comfortably Saturday, but I do think Utah Tech is better than non-scholarship Drake. **Bill Speltz:** Montana 44, Utah Tech 17. **Frank Gogola:** Griz 52, Utah Tech 7. **Victor Flores:** Griz 49, Blazers 10. **Carson Cashion:** Montana 56, Utah Tech 13.

No. 1 Montana State (2-0) at Nevada (1-0), 8:30 p.m. TV: The CW. The Bobcats' 16-game winning streak may come to an end this week. The Wolf Pack looked good in dismantling FBS Western Kentucky last Saturday, 49-14, in Reno. The Hilltoppers only managed one score before the final 2 minutes of the game. That's what impressed me the most about Nevada. That and the fact the Wolf Pack racked up 323 yards rushing, led by Kelley Dominic with 11 carries for 152 yards and two touchdowns. Jeff Choate, former Bobcats coach and current Wolf Pack coach, is going to have his troops tuned in for Montana State. Pride plays a role in this one and Nevada will win at home in a close one. **Speltz:** Wolf Pack 30, Bobcats 27. **Gogola:** Cats 31, Nevada 23. **Flores:** Cats 27, Wolf Pack 24. **Cashion:** Nevada 45, Montana State 42.

San Diego (0-1) at No. 17 Idaho State (2-0), 4 p.m. TV: ESPN+. Last Saturday the Bengals earned the first win by a Big Sky team over an FBS program since 2024, beating Utah State, 29-17. Idaho State had a strong finish, outscoring the Aggies 10-0 in the fourth quarter. Utah State finished with a 407-241 edge in total yards but turned the ball over four times. The Bengals are back at home this week and should cruise against the Toreros, who were whipped by UC Davis in

their home debut last weekend. **Speltz:** Bengals 41, Toreros 20. **Gogola:** Bengals 45, San Diego 17. **Flores:** Idaho State 56, San Diego 14. **Cashion:** Idaho State 31, San Diego 10.

No. 7 UC Davis (2-0) at FBS No. 19 SMU, 2 p.m. TV: ACC Network. Like the Montana State Bobcats, the Aggies will probably suffer their first loss this week in Dallas, Texas. Whenever I think of SMU football my mind goes right back to 1987 when the Mustangs were dealt the death penalty by the NCAA for rampant pay-for-play infractions. Ah, the good old days of Eric Dickerson and Craig James. Funny how times change. Now college players everywhere get paid to play and it's more than just a little money. **Speltz:** SMU 42, UC Davis 24. **Gogola:** SMU 41, Davis 17. **Flores:** SMU 38, Davis 21. **Cashion:** SMU 56, UC Davis 14.

No. 14 Lamar (1-1) at Idaho (0-2), 2 p.m. TV: ESPN+. Those poor Vandals have given up 104 points in two games. Of course, one of those games was against FBS 21st-ranked Utah, which drubbed Idaho last week in Salt Lake City, 66-14. The Vandals have tallied 48 points of their own this year and they'll score some against Lamar, but it won't be enough. **Speltz:** Cardinals 37, Vandals 27. **Gogola:** Lamar 34, Idaho 27. **Flores:** Idaho 24, Lamar 21. **Cashion:** Idaho 27, Lamar 17.

Eastern Washington (1-1) at No. 11 South Dakota (2-0), noon. TV: ESPN+. Whenever I think about the Coyotes, my mind goes back to the 2013 season when ex-Griz coach Joe Glenn was leading the team. Glenn's South Dakota squad was looking good to pull a dome upset over Mick Delaney's Grizzlies before Ellis Henderson delivered a big 98-yard kickoff return for a touchdown. Exciting times. South Dakota hasn't really had a compelling win this season, but the team did pile up 59 points in a debut win over Central Connecticut State. I'll go with the Coyotes at home. **Speltz:** Coyotes 38, Eags 23. **Gogola:** South Dakota 42, EWU 27. **Flores:** USD 31, EWU 20. **Cashion:** South Dakota 31, Eastern Washington 14.

Cal Poly (2-0) at FBS San Jose State (1-1), 7 p.m. TV: Mountain West Network. Kudos to the Mustangs and their first-year head coach, Tim Skipper, on the 2-0 start. Those two wins aren't going to blow the lid off the Big Sky, but it's been a long time since Cal Poly was relevant in football. The Mustangs will suffer their first defeat this week, but there's no shame in that when you're up against a Spartans team that beat Eastern Michigan on the road last week. **Speltz:** Spartans 40, Mustangs 21. **Gogola:** SJSU 35, Cal Poly 21. **Flores:** SJSU 34, Cal Poly 17. **Cashion:** San Jose State 45, Cal Poly 17.

Weber State (1-1) at FBS Colorado (1-0), 1:30 p.m. TV: ESPN+. Deion Sanders the NFL player was fun to watch. I've never been a big fan of Deion Sanders the coach with his signature sunglasses. Likewise, I'm not a big fan of his quarterback son. But you have to give the Buffaloes credit for pulling out a road win over Georgia Tech last week. They'll move to 2-0 this Saturday. My only question is why did Colorado schedule Weber State? **Speltz:** Buffaloes 56, Wildcats 13. **Gogola:** Colorado 49, Weber 10. **Flores:** Colorado 48, Weber 14. **Cashion:** Colorado 31, Weber State 7.

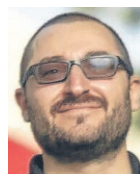
Incarnate Word (1-0) at No. 24 Northern Arizona (1-1), 2 p.m. TV: ESPN+. This might be the toughest game to pick this week. Incarnate Word has been in the top 25 rankings a lot in recent years but who knows what the team has this season? The Cardinals did pound Oklahoma Panhandle State in their debut last weekend, so they are capable. But I'm going with the Lumberjacks in their dome at 7,000 feet. **Speltz:** Jacks 28, Cardinals 27. **Gogola:** NAU 31, UIW 21. **Flores:** NAU 34, UIW 24. **Cashion:** Northern Arizona 42, Incarnate Word 38.

Northern Colorado (0-2) at FBS Wyoming (0-1), 2 p.m. TV: Mountain West Network. Tough matchup for the winless Bears, especially when considering the Cowboys are going to be angry coming off a 35-13 debut loss at Colorado State. **Speltz:** Cowboys 41, Bears 14. **Gogola:** Wyoming 42, UNC 17. **Flores:** Wyoming 38, UNC 14. **Cashion:** Wyoming 35, Northern Colorado 10.

Southern Utah (1-1) at FBS Colorado State (1-0), 5 p.m. TV: CBS Sports Network. The Thunderbirds had a nice bounce-back home win over Weber State last Saturday after dropping a heartbreaking opener at Montana two weeks ago. The only troubling part was the point total SUU allowed in beating Weber State, 47-42. The Thunderbirds will need to play a lot better defense to stay with the Rams. **Speltz:** Rams 49, Thunderbirds 21. **Gogola:** CSU 38, SUU 23. **Flores:** CSU 28, SUU 13. **Cashion:** Colorado State 38, Southern Utah 17.

No. 6 North Dakota (2-0) at Portland State (0-2), 8 p.m. TV: ESPN+. The Vikings put a scare into UC Davis before losing to the Aggies in Portland two weeks ago. Portland State is much-improved, but the Fighting Hawks will be ready for Saturday's road test. **Speltz:** Fighting Hawks 35, Vikings 24. **Gogola:** UND 45, PSU 20. **Flores:** UND 42, PSU 21. **Cashion:** North Dakota 49, Portland State 13.

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**FRANK
GOGOLA**

17-2



**BILL
SPELTZ**

17-2



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17-2



**VICTOR
FLORES**

16-3

No.	Name	Yr.	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Hometown	21	Ashton Paine	Sr.	DB	6-1	193	Tumwater, Wash.	59	Nui Tovey	So.	DE	6-3	250	Lake Oswego, Ore.
0	Monte Gillman	Jr.	RB	5-8	167	Dassel, Minn.	21	Courtney Rogers	Fr.	RB	6-2	211	Blytheville, Ark.	60	Wyatt Sandford	5th	OL	6-4	298	Coeur d'Alene, Idaho
0	Gabe Stroud	Jr.	CB	5-11	185	Tyler, Texas	23	Dane Kellner	Fr.	S	5-11	170	Honolulu, Hawaii	61	Lincoln Hoefler	So.	OL	6-6	306	Everson, Wash.
2	Hunter Haines	Jr.	S	6-2	212	West Linn, Ore.	23	Dylan Paine	Gr.	RB	5-9	198	Tumwater, Wash.	62	Lincoln Senter	Fr.	OL	6-5	240	Great Falls, Mont.
2	Landon Ransom-Goelz	Sr.	WR	6-1	188	Trophy Club, Texas	24	Justin Eklund	5th	LB	6-2	235	Rocklin, Calif.	63	Kaikoa Kanakaole	So.	OL	6-5	295	Kapa'a, Hawaii
3	Brooks Davis	Jr.	WR	6-0	180	Brentwood, Calif.	25	Brady Beaner	So.	S	6-0	191	Anacortes, Wash.	64	Matt Hilden	Jr.	OL	6-6	304	Santa Rosa, Calif.
3	Jeilani Davis	Jr.	CB	6-0	201	Inglewood, Calif.	26	Chase Cook	So.	RB	5-11	197	Red Lodge, Mont.	65	Dylan Jemtegaard	Gr.	OL	6-4	296	Yelm, Wash.
4	Luke Flowers	Jr.	QB	6-1	191	Rigby, Idaho	27	Nohi Casco	Fr.	CB	5-11	195	Lahaina, Hawaii	66	Ezra Meyer	So.	OL	6-5	292	Missoula, Mont.
4	Dane Parker	Jr.	S	6-1	180	Puyallup, Wash.	28	Hashim Jones	So.	RB	6-0	200	Hartford, Conn.	68	Torin Jeske	Jr.	OL	6-6	295	Bozeman, Mont.
5	Ian Finch	5th	WR	6-3	210	Missoula, Mont.	29	Tanner Huff	Gr.	S	6-0	208	Butte, Mont.	69	Trevor Steinbach	Jr.	OL	6-5	300	Sammamish, Wash.
5	Hudson Schrader	Fr.	S	6-2	194	Los Gatos, Calif.	30	Kade Cutler	5th	S	6-0	207	Phillipsburg, Mont.	70	Josiah West	Fr.	OL	6-6	317	Prosser, Wash.
6	Chris Johnson II	Jr.	CB	6-1	190	Fort Worth, Texas	31	Tanner Williams	Jr.	LB	6-1	218	Orange, Calif.	71	Quinlan Hyatt	So.	OL	6-7	295	Spokane, Wash.
6	Legend Lyons	So.	WR	6-2	185	Covina, Calif.	32	Peyton Wing	5th	LB	6-0	225	Sumner, Wash.	72	Jack D'Ambra	Gr.	OL	6-3	303	Wildomar, Calif.
7	Weston Adams	5th	WR	5-11	192	Shell, Wyo.	33	Taylor Jones	So.	LB	6-1	210	Missoula, Mont.	74	Owen Liechti	Fr.	OL	6-7	250	Arkeny, Iowa
7	Kash Goicoechea	Jr.	S	6-1	199	Kalispell, Mont.	34	Parker Link	Fr.	S	5-10	191	Missoula, Mont.	75	Dyllan Drummond	Jr.	OL	6-4	315	Tyler, Texas
8	Keali'i Ah Yat	Sr.	QB	6-1	210	Kaneohe, Hawaii	35	Cooper Neer	Fr.	LB	6-3	202	Kennewick, Wash.	76	Campbell Vandiver	Sr.	OT	6-8	285	Nashville, Tenn.
8	Adama Fall	Gr.	S	6-3	210	Dakar, Senegal	36	Garrett Speer	Jr.	DB	6-0	195	Sherwood, Ore.	77	Carter Bowen	Sr.	OL	6-7	305	Dawson, Minn.
9	Jordan Dever	Sr.	WR	6-0	175	Spokane, Wash.	37	Clay Oven	Jr.	LB	6-2	225	Billings, Mont.	78	Lucas Freitas	Sr.	OL	6-6	310	Snoqualmie, Wash.
9	Kougar Kappel	Fr.	S	6-0	178	Red Lodge, Mont.	38	Nai Mose	5th	LB	6-0	225	Euless, Texas	80	Malaki Davis	Fr.	TE	6-5	230	Tacoma, Wash.
10	Eli Gillman	5th	RB	6-0	215	Dassel, Minn.	39	Fynn Ridgeway	Sr.	RB	6-1	208	Whitefish, Mont.	81	Mariano Birdno	Jr.	TE	6-5	255	Flagstaff, Ariz.
10	Styles Goodman	So.	LB	6-2	230	Austin, Texas	40	Colton Lentz	So.	LB	6-3	223	Nooksack, Wash.	82	Merek Fisher	Fr.	TE	6-6	238	Billings, Mont.
11	Cameron Gurnsey	Sr.	WR	6-1	195	Butte, Mont.	41	Ryder Barinowski	Jr.	K	6-0	203	Whitefish, Mont.	83	Dawson Hammond	Fr.	WR	6-0	176	Malta, Mont.
11	Jayden Nicholas	Fr.	CB	6-0	168	Concord, Calif.	42	Giovanni Pifferini	Sr.	DL	6-4	230	Placerville, Calif.	84	Grady Walker	Jr.	TE	6-4	235	Missoula, Mont.
12	Elijah Brady	Sr.	CB	6-1	176	Seattle, Wash.	43	Cooper Cyphers	Fr.	DL	6-2	253	Fort Worth, Texas	85	Wesley Ehret	Fr.	WR	6-2	190	Belgrade, Mont.
12	Gage Sliter	Sr.	QB	6-1	199	Kalispell, Mont.	44	Titus Rohrer	5th	TE	6-7	235	Bryan, Ohio	86	William Snell	Fr.	WR	6-4	189	Billings, Mont.
13	Brock Beaner	So.	S	6-0	202	Anacortes, Wash.	45	Wyatt Redding	5th	KP	6-1	212	Sumner, Wash.	87	Everett O'Donnell	Jr.	P	6-2	199	Melbourne, Aus.
13	Lekeldrick Bridges	Jr.	WR	5-11	175	Cedar Hill, Texas	46	Jo Silver	5th	KP	6-0	221	Fremont, Ohio	88	Reese Brooks	So.	TE	6-4	230	Round Rock, Texas
14	DeAnte Gentry	So.	CB	5-11	170	Fort Worth, Texas	47	Jace Eastlick	Jr.	LS	6-3	222	Coeur d'Alene, Idaho	89	Danny Sirmon	Jr.	TE	6-6	265	Missoula, Mont.
14	Korbin Hendrix	Sr.	WR	6-3	190	McKinney, Texas	48	Isaac Keim	Jr.	DL	6-4	280	Kalispell, Mont.	90	Tyler King	Sr.	DL	6-5	252	Happy Valley, Ore.
16	Brady Jay	Fr.	QB	6-1	177	Moses Lake, Wash.	49	Elijah Rincon	Fr.	DE	6-3	226	Hacienda Heights, Calif.	91	Cooper Buffington	So.	DL	6-4	275	Winfield, Iowa
16	Kraeden Orlandi	Sr.	S	6-1	200	Valley Springs, Calif.	50	Sam Merriman	So.	LB	6-0	230	Seattle, Wash.	92	Zekiel Seumalo	Sr.	DL	6-0	265	Kent, Wash.
17	Bade Boyd	Sr.	S	6-0	198	Billings, Mont.	51	Spencer Tripp	So.	DL	5-11	268	Missoula, Mont.	94	Cole Harpole	So.	DL	6-3	240	Gunter, Texas
17	Bridger Smith	So.	WR	6-1	178	Kalispell, Mont.	53	Mac Olsen	Fr.	DL	6-4	253	Manti, Utah	95	Manase Tupou	Jr.	DL	6-1	315	Kihei, Hawaii
18	Devin Dunn	5th	DB	5-10	190	Chandler, Ariz.	54	Evan Pyron	Fr.	DE	6-3	244	Missoula, Mont.	96	Logan Knaevelsrud	So.	DL	6-4	252	Snoqualmie, Wash.
18	Cody Schweikert	Jr.	QB	6-3	217	Columbia Falls, Mont.	55	Austin Buehler	Sr.	OL	6-5	295	Helena, Mont.	97	Hayden Schwartz	5th	DL	6-4	245	Jacksonville, Fla.
19	Drew Price	So.	QB	5-10	179	Jacksonville, Fla.	55	Zaiden Wallace	Jr.	DL	6-4	300	Ewa Beach, Hawaii	98	Derek Opitz	Fr.	DT	6-3	244	Helena, Mont.
19	Rodney Weatherspoon	Fr.	CB	6-0	170	Forth Worth, Texas	57	Jake Mason	Sr.	DL	6-2	265	Ferndale, Wash.	99	Braydon Bailey	5th	DT	6-2	302	Kona, Hawaii
20	Sage Salopek	So.	CB	6-0	171	Seattle, Wash.	58	Solomon Tuliaupupu	Gr.	LB	6-3	260	Pomona, Calif.							

No.	Name	Yr.	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Hometown	19	Jax Jones	Jr.	OLB	6-3	240	Blythe, Calif.	51	Tyson Toscano	So.	DL	6-2	280	Ontario, Calif.
0	Ace Chatman	Jr.	RB	5-11	195	Lake Elsinore, Calif.	20	Ryan Tillman	Fr.	DB	5-11	185	Baltimore, Md.	52	Gavin Gleason	So.	OL	6-4	285	Oakdale, Calif.
0	Jeremiah Jimoh	Jr.	DB	6-2	190	Salt Lake City, Utah	20	Daron Tyson	Fr.	RB	6-0	180	San Bernardino, Calif.	53	Robert Smith	Fr.	DL	6-2	310	Las Vegas, Nev.
1	Dajon Harrison	5th	WR	6-0	183	Pflugerville, Texas	21	Isaac McMullin	So.	WR	5-8	160	Darien, Conn.	54	Jacob Zarate	Jr.	OL	6-6	305	St. George, Utah
1	Daylen Love	So.	ILB	6-3	220	San Jacinto, Calif.	21	Amari Sanders	So.	DB	6-0	160	San Diego, Calif.	55	Adrian Lopez	Sr.	OL	6-2	290	Stockton, Calif.
2	Brevin Czosnyka	5th	DB	6-3	195	Glendale, Ariz.	22	Kona Crowell	Sr.	RB	6-0	210	Papakolea, Hawai'i	56	Jaggar Tava'i	Jr.	DL	6-0	300	Gardena, Calif.
2	CJ Tiller	Jr.	QB	6-2	210	Gilbert, Ariz.	22	Brady Sorenson	Jr.	DB	6-2	190	Boulder City, Nev.	58	Nico Rivera	Jr.	OL	6-2	285	Long Beach, Calif.
3	Fasitootai Sagapolu	5th	DL	6-2	305	St. George, Utah	23	Tray Flournoy	Fr.	DB	6-1	170	San Bernardino, Calif.	60	Matthew Snarr	So.	OL	6-5	315	Draper, Utah
4	Shaun Niu Jr.	Fr.	DB	6-1	185	Laie, Hawai'i	24	Justin Buhler	Sr.	TE	6-0	235	Frisco, Texas	61	Connor Mickelson	Sr.	LS	5-8	175	Grace, Idaho
4	Michael Williams	Sr.	WR	5-11	180	Marrero, La.	24	Braden Cervello	Jr.	DB	5-10	170	Palm Desert, Calif.	64	Zach Brown	Sr.	OL	6-3	290	Lithia, Fla.
5	Uilisoni Angilau	Sr.	DL	6-3	250	South Jordan, Utah	25	Jagger Nieves	Fr.	RB	6-0	198	Blanding, Utah	66	Gavin Ipson	Fr.	OL	6-7	320	Washington, Utah
5	Junior Curtis	Fr.	RB	5-11	185	San Diego, Calif.	25	Archie Threlfall	Fr.	DB	6-1	198	St. George, Utah	67	Bryce Carroll	Jr.	OL	5-11	270	Appleton, Wis.
6	Zay Akinsanya	So.	TE	6-3	220	Las Vegas, Nev.	26	Max Shepherd	Fr.	PK	6-0	185	Bend, Ore.	71	Pesi Fonua	So.	OL	6-3	303	Herriman, Utah
6	Adrian Dahlene	So.	ILB	6-2	215	Gilbert, Ariz.	26	Braylen Turner	Fr.	DB	6-1	160	Perris, Calif.	72	Reno Aceves	Fr.	OL	6-7	248	Chino, Calif.
7	Ja'kheo Mitchell	Sr.	WR	6-1	185	Del City, Okla.	27	Michael Gaines Jr.	Fr.	DB	5-11	167	Moreno Valley, Calif.	73	RJ San Jose	Fr.	OL	6-1	300	Eastvale, Calif.
7	Helaman Ofahengaue	5th	ILB	6-3	225	Lehi, Utah	28	Moe Passi	Jr.	ILB	6-2	230	Honolulu, Hawai'i	74	Camden Smith	Fr.	OL	6-3	285	St. George, Utah
8	RJ Jones II	Sr.	ILB	6-0	210	Pasadena, Calif.	28	Jalen Ross	Fr.	WR	5-8	170	Compton, Calif.	75	Greg Fotinopoulos	Sr.	OL	6-5	290	Wheaton, Ill.
8	Prince Zombo Jr.	Jr.	WR	6-0	190	Philadelphia, Pa.	29	Jalen Ford	Fr.	WR	6-2	170	Bakersfield, Calif.	76	Trey Price	Jr.	OL	6-4	300	Tooele, Utah
9	Abe Jager	So.	CB	6-2	180	Lehi, Utah	29	Blake Jensen	Fr.	DE	6-4	250	American Fork, Utah	77	Gino Veon	So.	OL	6-4	300	Simi Valley, Calif.
9	Damon Taylor	So.	RB	6-0	205	Kimberly, Idaho	30	Darryl Coleman	So.	DB	5-11	175	Yuma, Ariz.	78	Rambo Mageo	Sr.	OL	6-5	290	Laie, Hawai'i
10	Deacon Hill	5th	QB	6-4	245	Santa Barbara, Calif.	30	Maxwell Turner	So.	RB	5-9	190	San Diego, Calif.	79	Reggie Terry Jr.	So.	OL	6-5	320	Carson, Calif.
10	Hema Katoa	Fr.	ILB	6-1	215	Lehi, Utah	31	Murphy Madsen	Fr.	DB	5-10	170	Lehi, Utah	80	Elijah Aaron	So.	WR	6-4	190	Inglewood, Calif.
11	Will Alovao	Sr.	OLB	6-3	230	Kapolei, Hawai'i	32	Fisher Brown	Jr.	PK	5-11	197	Heber City, Utah	81	Tanner Crandall	Jr.	WR	5-11	190	Gilbert, Ariz.
11	Brayden Hampsten	So.	TE	6-6	245	Santa Clarita, Calif.	33	Ethan Edwards	Fr.	DB	6-0	165	Inglewood, Calif.	82	Dominick Malone	Fr.	WR	6-2	172	Clarksburg, Md.
12	Devin Costello	Jr.	DB	5-10	180	Kingston, N.Y.	34	Will Gamble	Fr.	OLB	6-3	215	Roosevelt, Utah	83	Quincy Jones	Fr.	WR	5-11	185	St. George, Utah
12	Cavalli Nealy	Fr.	RB	6-0	200	Temple, Texas	35	Justin Jones	Fr.	DB	6-1	175	Fullerton, Calif.	84	Elijah Davis	Jr.	WR	6-1	180	Oxnard, Calif.
13	Bronson Barben	Jr.	QB	6-5	220	St. George, Utah	36	Dax Iverson	So.	P/K	5-11	190	Farr West, Utah	85	Scott Noel	Fr.	TE	6-5	245	Bountiful, Utah
13	River Moore	Jr.	DB	5-11	185	Saratoga Springs, Utah	37	Wesley Garton	Jr.	LB	6-2	220	Novato, Calif.	86	Kaden Eggett	Jr.	TE	6-3	230	Kaysville, Utah
14	Will Greene	So.	WR	6-2	195	Folsom, Calif.	38	Isaiah Brown	Jr.	DB	5-9	174	Houston, Texas	87	Kade Martin	Jr.	WR	6-2	190	Meridian, Idaho
14	Jodi Nestan	Fr.	DB	5-11	170	Las Vegas, Nev.	39	Roy Ma'afala Jr.	So.	OLB	6-2	235	Honolulu, Hawai'i	88	Cyrus Aguinaga	Jr.	P/K	6-0	195	Gilbert, Ariz.
15	Max Grizzell	Jr.	QB	6-3	210	San Marino, Calif.	40	Jordan Mowers	So.	OLB	6-2	200	Snowflake, Ariz.	89	Zay Morris	Fr.	WR	5-10	170	Roy, Utah
15	Ryan Marks	Sr.	P	6-0	235	Farmington, Utah	42	Skylar Briggs	So.	OLB	6-1	235	Encinitas, Calif.	90	Brandon Jackson	Jr.	DL	6-2	290	Dallas, Texas
16	Davyn Sedwick	So.	WR	6-3	170	Georgetown, Texas	43	Fagali'i Leatutufu	Sr.	OLB	6-2	230	Wahiawa, Hawai'i	91	Michael Oquarkoub	Fr.	DL	6-3	300	Menifee, Calif.
16	Leka Tu'akoi	Jr.	OLB	6-3	218	Sandy, Utah	44	Aiden McComber	Jr.	OLB	6-0	250	Las Vegas Nev.	92	Damien Burgueno	Jr.	DL	6-2	285	Chino Hills, Calif.
17	Quincy Lejay	Sr.	DB	6-0	195	Eastvale, Calif.	45	Mason Wood	Fr.	LB	6-2	230	Draper, Utah	93	Spencer Parham	Fr.	DL	6-2	330	Los Angeles, Calif.
17	Justus Platts	Fr.	QB	6-0	200	Mountain View, Wyo.	46	Andrew Vance	Fr.	LS	5-11	186	Washington, Utah	94	Tyson Simmons	Jr.	DL	6-3	265	Chandler, Ariz.
18	Luke Hansen	Fr.	ILB	6-3	215	Farmington, Utah	47	Trey Kalauli	5th	LS	6-3	210	Moccasin, Ariz.	95	Zayden Cook	Jr.	DL	6-3	290	Goshen, Utah
18	Darnell O'Quinn	Jr.	WR	5-11	150	New Orleans, La.	48	Kalvin Voyles	Jr.	TE	6-3	240	Kingsburg, Calif.	96	Mubarak Odubiyi	Sr.	DL	6-1	245	Covina, Calif.
19	Nic Ceballos	Jr.	WR	6-1	180	Draper, Utah	49	Micah Madry	Jr.	TE	6-5	225	Salt Lake City, Utah	98	Coleton Pouquette	Fr.	DL	6-3	255	Yuma, Ariz.
							50	Cade Draper	So.	OL	6-2	290	Roy, Utah	99	Isai Perez Jr.	Sr.	DL	6-3	285	Pacoima, Calif.

Finch

From 2

“He’s not selfish at all,” Price said. “If you throw him in there just to block only, he’s good with that. That’s why he’s so good on special teams. They’re always putting him in different roles and he’s always winning our player of the week for special teams. That is a winning mentality. It’s a team mentality for him more than anything.”

Finch’s route running and hands with catching passes had stood out as why Pease wanted to recruit him out of high school. He caught 162 passes for 2,741 yards and 28 touchdowns in 26 varsity games.

Pease saw things start to click for Finch when he got involved on special teams. Finch finally saw the field in his third season in 2024, primarily on special teams, and caught a touchdown on his first reception.

He added three catches in 2025 but was more so tasked with situational blocking on offense. He also starred in the third phase and was named a co-recipient of the Hauck Family special teams player of the year award.

“That’s what this place is all about,” Pease said. “We’re about the blue collar-type person. That’s what he is. He’s very unselfish. He never complains about anything. He’s willing to contribute a lot as much as he can and is willing to do whatever. That’s what he’s all about.”

Finch has found the drive and motivation to put in all the work he has because he’s eager to put on for his hometown university. Growing up, he had seen what the Griz mean to the city, so he’s strived to uphold the high standard.

He can always find his family in the stands when he runs out of the tunnel on game day as they still have



BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

Montana wide receiver Ian Finch (5) looks on during the college football game against Central Washington on Sept. 6, 2025, at Washington-Grizzly Stadium in Missoula. Finch played his high school football at Missoula Hellgate.

their same season tickets in section 125, he said. It’s also been “pretty surreal” to be coached by Sneed after being a fan of the former Grizzly who started at quarterback in 2018 and 2019.

“It’s just a willingness to make my community proud,” Finch said. “I was eager to make my parents proud, my family proud, my friends proud. Just being a kid from Missoula, I want to be a kid that has put in his time, he’s worked really hard to achieve what he’s wanted, and I’m really happy with what I’ve done so far.”

Price sees potential for Finch to have his largest role so far in his final season playing in front of family, friends and Griz Nation. To Price, that means being an every-down player in three-receiver sets as he

works back to full health.

He has seen Finch provide leadership by example in the position group while being a hybrid receiver/tight end. Pease and Kennedy also praised his increasing leadership.

Wide receiver Lekeldrick Bridges gave props to Finch following his own breakout performance in the season opener.

“He’s like a playbook guru, so he’s helped me develop a lot,” Bridges said.

Finch’s increase in playing time over the years came as he matured as a player. It also came after he returned from a broken collarbone injury he sustained during his freshman season.

He knew he had to get bigger, faster and stronger after he saw how much more violent the college game was compared to

high school. He has since proved to himself that he is in fact more physical than he thought he was in high school.

“It’s having a willingness to compete and do what’s asked of you, whether you want to or not,” he said of taking on a physical role. “I think that shows how much you like your team, how much you like your teammates.”

Finch has already earned his bachelor’s degree in business management. He’s currently working on his Master of Business Administration to help set him up for life after football.

Before he departs the gridiron, he was part of a group of Griz players who hosted youth football camps this past summer. Giving back to the younger generation is important to

him.

That’s another meaningful win in his book.

“I was once that kid,” he said. “I always wanted to meet the players, just learn from them, be around them when they don’t have their pads on. I think it’s a huge thing. We had a great group of guys and that was super

fun. I wish we all would have done that earlier in our careers.”

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@406mtsports.com.

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Bridges

From 3

Q: Did you take an official visit to Missoula? What was that experience like for you?

A: My OV was actually pretty nice. It was different scenery. My first time hearing about Montana and coming out here, it was a way different scenery, you know, mountains and stuff. We don't have none of that back home. I like the scenery and stuff and the people.

Q: Is there anything about Montana or Missoula that you didn't know yet on your visit that you've come to learn in the past couple years?

A: Yeah, it's a lot of wildlife animals just *everywhere*, and that was like pretty different. But I got used to it.

Q: Any animals you've seen that stand out?

A: The deer, raccoons, moose, bears, stuff like that. Different stuff.

Q: In the past couple seasons, who in the wide receiver room do you feel like you've leaned on the most and learned the most from?

A: I play in the slot now, so we've had Jun' (Junior Bergen) and Mike (Wortham Jr.), so I'd say those two. As far as people in my class we got Brooks (Davis), you know Luke (Flowers) keeps my head up. All the receivers keep everybody's heads up.

Q: You've had three different wide receivers coach in your three years here, what was that first year with Kennedy like in 2025?

A: I'll say the first year with BK was pretty different, because BK is a more amped-up coach than Coach E (Bryce Erickson) at the time, so it was good. After it was good and bad

because you know Coach E was laid back, and you know BK just came in demanding, demanding, demanding. But as we got closer to BK, it just got way better as far as the connection with him.

Q: Do you have any memories from last season at practice with Kennedy?

A: I mean BK, he chews everybody out. He's got a deep voice and a bigger body so he's more intimidating and stuff.

Q: You've talked going through injuries in the past, what were some of those that you dealt with?

A: Mostly hamstringing stuff, some shin issues, mainly minor things that just kept coming back through high school.

Q: You talked at the press conference after the Southern Utah win about your mind not being right last season. What do you feel like helped you overcome that and get to a better place mentally?

A: I'll just say my teammates just keeping my head up. Last year, my head was down and my teammates were seeing that. I just try to come around my teammates with good energy.

Q: How has (Montana wide receivers coach) Eric Price been with the group so far this year?

A: Price, he's a chill,

laid-back guy. He's really not gonna yell at you unless you mess up. I like that.

Q: You had an early drop in the Southern Utah game before the late touchdown, what did you do to keep your confidence up as the game went on?

A: (Montana quarterback Keali'i) Ah Yat came over to me. He was like, "Just pick your head up, I'm gonna still keep coming to you."

Q: Does being a full-time starter help your mental focus at all going into the year, knowing you're going to be involved on a week-to-week basis?

A: I feel like yes and no. I'd say yes because now everybody's looking up at me, but at the same time no because in our receiver room, anybody in our depth can play. If I mess up, next man up.

Q: Does being from the Dallas area make you a Cowboys fan?

A: No, actually, I'd say the Texans.

Q: Do you have a favorite all-time Texan?

A: I'll go either D-Hop (DeAndre Hopkins) or Tank Dell.

Carson Cashion is a sports writer for 406 MT Sports. Follow him on X @CarsonCashion or contact him at carson.cashion@406mtsports.com.



SHANNA MADISON, MISSOULIAN

Montana wide receiver Lekeldrick Bridges (13) runs into the end zone during the college football game against Southern Utah on Aug. 29 at Washington-Grizzly Stadium in Missoula. Bridges scored his first career touchdown in the win.

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