

MONTANA AT MONTANA STATE • KICKOFF: NOON SATURDAY • TV: MTN • THURSDAY, NOV. 21, 2024

GRIZZLY GAME DAY

Missoulian

DOCTOR

Dillon Botner
overcomes injuries,
pursues medical school

BOTNER

SHANNA MADISON, MISSOULIAN

ROSTERS, PAGE 2 • Q&A WITH K/P TY MORRISON, PAGE 4 • SPELTZ PICKS THE BIG SKY, PAGE 5



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MONTANA STATE ROSTER

No.	Name	Year	Pos.	Hgt.	Wt.	Hometown	22	Takhari Carr	So.	DB	6-0	175	Compton, Calif.	57	Everett Carr	R-Fr.	OL	6-4	290	Bozeman, Mont.
0	Blake Stillwell	Jr.	S	6-1	180	Winter Garden, Fla.	22	Scottre Humphrey	So.	RB	5-11	210	Seattle, Wash.	58	Dominic Solano	So.	DE	6-4	235	Glendale, Ariz.
1	Marqui Johnson	Sr.	WR	5-8	180	Philadelphia, Pa.	23	Seth Johnson	Fr.	DB	5-10	161	Frisco, Texas	59	Samora Ezekiel	So.	OL	6-2	285	Fort Worth, Texas
1	Andrew Powdrell	So.	DB	5-10	185	The Woodlands, Texas	23	Adam Jones	R-Fr.	RB	6-1	200	Missoula, Mont.	60	Tommy Nizel	So.	OL	6-3	285	Missoula, Mont.
2	Lonyatta Alexander Jr.	Jr.	WR	6-3	210	Auburn, Wash.	24	Colter Petre	R-Fr.	DB	6-1	195	Helena, Mont.	61	Aiden Kaplan	Fr.	OL	6-3	277	Montgomery, Texas
2	Dru Polidore	Jr.	S	6-2	180	Katy, Texas	25	Jacob Trimble	So.	WR	6-0	195	North Richland Hills, Texas	63	Dylan Rollins	Fr.	OL	6-6	300	Missoula, Mont.
3	Kory Boyd	Fr.	DB	6-0	170	Dallas, Texas	25	Carson Williams	Fr.	DB	5-11	160	Houston, Texas	64	Burke Mastel	So.	OL	6-4	315	Red Lodge, Mont.
3	Jared White	So.	RB	5-10	195	Frisco, Texas	26	Rylan Ort	Sr.	S/N	6-1	210	Missoula, Mont.	65	Justus Perkins	Sr.	C	6-0	290	Bozeman, Mont.
4	Jon Johnson	Sr.	CB	6-0	185	Gardena, Calif.	27	Brock Steel	So.	DB	6-1	205	Sheridan, Wyo.	66	Titan Fleischmann	R-So.	OT	6-4	300	Pocatello, Idaho
4	Tommy Mellott	Sr.	QB	6-0	208	Butte, Mont.	28	Colson Coon	R-Fr.	RB	5-11	195	Sheridan, Wyo.	69	Jaren Perkins	So.	DT	6-1	265	Bozeman, Mont.
5	Caden Dowler	So.	S/N	6-0	200	Billings, Mont.	29	JJ Dolan	R-Fr.	DB	6-0	175	Missoula, Mont.	71	Tommy Sullivan	Sr.	LS	5-11	200	Everett, Wash.
5	Javonte King	R-Fr.	WR	6-4	220	Blackfoot, Idaho	30	Danny Uluilakepa	Sr.	LB	6-1	225	Puyallup, Wash.	72	Conner Moore	So.	OT	6-5	310	Millbury, Ohio
6	Miles Jackson	Sr.	CB	5-11	190	Portland, Ore.	31	Unterrio Latin-Henley	Fr.	RB	5-11	169	Tacoma, Wash.	73	Cedric Jefferson	R-Fr.	OL	6-4	300	Temecula, Calif.
6	Ty McCullouch	Sr.	WR	6-1	180	Moreno Valley, Calif.	32	Julius Davis	Sr.	RB	5-10	195	Menomonie Falls, Wis.	74	Jaden Perkins	So.	OL	6-1	280	Bozeman, Mont.
7	Tayden Gray	R-Fr.	DB	6-0	185	Arlington, Texas	33	Mason Dethman	Fr.	LB	6-4	206	Brockton, Mont.	75	Braden Zimmer	Fr.	OL	6-6	240	Billings, Mont.
8	Rohan Jones	Jr.	TE	6-3	235	Montreal, Quebec	34	Cole Taylor	R-Fr.	LB	6-3	230	Great Falls, Mont.	76	Marcus Wehr	Sr.	OT	6-4	300	Billings, Mont.
8	Ryan King	Jr.	WR	6-4	216	Loganville, Ga.	35	Ryan Nansel	Fr.	DB	6-0	177	Bozeman, Mont.	79	Jonathan Luhmann	R-Fr.	OL	6-4	295	Florence, Mont.
9	Simeon Woodward	Sr.	CB	5-10	180	San Antonio, Texas	35	Dane Steel	Fr.	WR	5-10	178	Sheridan, Wyo.	80	Luvens Valcin	Fr.	TE	6-1	228	Auburn, Wash.
10	Bryce Grebe	R-Fr.	LB	6-2	225	Melstone, Mont.	36	Zac Crews	So.	DE	6-4	235	Missoula, Mont.	81	Maclain Burckley	Fr.	WR	6-2	194	Billings, Mont.
10	Jabez Woods	Fr.	WR	5-11	178	Spanaway, Wash.	37	Josh Woodberry	Fr.	LB	5-11	205	Bozeman, Mont.	82	Luke Smith	R-Fr.	TE	6-5	230	Bozeman, Mont.
11	Kenneth Eiden IV	Jr.	DE	6-1	245	Bozeman, Mont.	38	Casey Kautzman	So.	K/P	5-11	190	Butte, Mont.	85	Aidan Garrigan	Jr.	WR	6-3	200	Magnolia, Texas
11	Elijah Elliott	Sr.	RB	5-10	190	Portland, Ore.	39	Myles Sansted	So.	K	6-3	188	Alexandria, Minn.	86	Hunter Provience	R-Fr.	TE	6-5	245	San Diego, Calif.
12	Ryan Bowles	Fr.	LB	6-2	213	Woodinville, Wash.	40	Cole Bullock	Sr.	LB	6-0	215	Chatsworth, Calif.	87	Ryan Lonergan	Sr.	TE	6-4	245	Bozeman, Mont.
12	Jhase McMillan	Fr.	DB	5-9	157	Fulshear, Texas	41	Brody Grebe	Sr.	DE	6-3	250	Melstone, Mont.	88	Rylan Schlepp	So.	TE	6-4	235	Bozeman, Mont.
12	Jordan Reed	So.	QB	6-6	228	El Centro, Calif.	42	Ryan Krahe	So.	LB	6-2	230	Great Falls, Mont.	89	Rocky Lencioni	Fr.	TE	6-3	220	Bozeman, Mont.
13	Jackson Harmon	So.	CB	6-3	200	Anchorage, Alaska	43	McCade O'Reilly	Sr.	LB	6-0	220	Bozeman, Mont.	90	Hunter Sharbono	R-Fr.	DT	6-2	280	Fairview, Mont.
13	Chance Wilson	R-Fr.	QB	6-3	180	Owasso, Okla.	44	Jake Vigen	So.	DE	6-2	235	Bozeman, Mont.	91	Seth Brock	Fr.	DE	6-3	204	Eagle, Idaho
14	Taco Dowler	So.	WR	5-9	175	Billings, Mont.	45	Hunter Parsons	Jr.	DE	6-4	245	Sparks, Nev.	92	Blake Schmidt	Sr.	DT	6-2	300	San Diego, Calif.
15	Patrick Duchien	R-Fr.	QB	6-2	210	Florence, Mont.	46	Logan Fredericksen	So.	DE	6-3	240	Rigby, Idaho	93	Brendan Hall	Sr.	P/KO	6-9	235	Springtown, Texas
16	Z. Dodson-Greene	So.	WR	6-1	185	Salem, Ore.	48	Max Murphy	So.	FB	6-2	230	Billings, Mont.	94	Case Kruse	Fr.	DL	6-2	225	Manhattan, Mont.
16	Brendon Ross	Fr.	DB	5-10	173	Rockwall, Texas	49	Zac Waible	So.	LB	6-2	215	Lake Oswego, Ore.	95	Ryder Trujillo	R-Fr.	DL	6-4	275	Orange, Calif.
17	Thomas Buchanan	Fr.	QB	6-4	214	Red Lodge, Mont.	50	Zack Black	Jr.	DT	6-4	275	Meridian, Idaho	96	Paul Brott	Jr.	DT	6-3	290	Billings, Mont.
17	Taki Uluilakepa	R-Fr.	DB	6-0	175	Provo, Utah	51	Nicholas Korom	Sr.	DL	6-2	275	Bismarck, N.D.	97	Alec Eckert	So.	DT	6-2	280	Lewiston, Idaho
18	Garrett Walchli	Sr.	WR	5-8	175	Hermiston, Ore.	51	Dalton Noble	Fr.	OL	6-4	260	Clancy, Mont.	98	Hudson Wiens	Fr.	DL	6-3	250	Bozeman, Mont.
19	Tom Carter	R-Fr.	WR	6-0	175	Helena, Mont.	54	Zac Nyland	R-Fr.	C/OG	6-4	280	Meridian, Idaho	99	Talon Marsh	R-Fr.	DL	6-1	280	Helena, Mont.
19	Neil Daily	So.	LB	6-3	230	Billings, Mont.	55	JT Reed	Sr.	OG	6-3	290	San Jose, Calif.							
20	Kee Christiansen	Fr.	WR	6-0	192	Dillon, Mont.	55	AJ Tanupo	Fr.	DT	6-2	295	Tacoma, Wash.							
20	Tyson Pottenger	Jr.	S	6-2	180	Coeur d'Alene, Idaho	56	Cole Sain	Gr.	OG/C	6-4	300	Darby, Mont.							

Botner battles back

Whitefish grad earns 1st career start in 6th year on offensive line

FRANK GOGOLA
406 MT Sports

Dillon Botner knew instantly what had happened.

He had fallen down on the grass at Dornblaser Field after he took a hit from Braxton Hill during a live football practice last fall. He rolled over, looked at his leg and noticed his kneecap was in the wrong spot: on the side of his knee.

"I was like, 'Oh, shit, not again,'" Botner, now a senior, recalled ahead of Montana's game against Montana State at noon on Saturday in Bozeman.

He straightened his leg and clicked his kneecap where it should be as head coach Bobby Hauck and lineman Cannon Panfiloff watched on nearby. Hauck then called an end to the fall camp practice one play earlier than was scripted.

Botner underwent surgery to repair the torn patellar tendon graft in his knee. He had to watch from the sideline during the entire 2023 season as Montana made runs to the Big Sky Conference championship and FCS title game.

He was down but far from out.

"I didn't want my career to end like that," he said. "I put a lot of time and effort in. Then that happened, and I was like, 'I can't go out like that. I need to come back.'"

Botner returned this past off-season determined to work his way back into playing shape. He battled through nearly six months of recovery that included inflammation and irritation in his knee while working to regain strength.

He's played in 10 games this season and made his first career start in the Oct. 12 win over



SHANNA MADISON, MISSOULIAN

Montana offensive lineman Dillon Botner warms up before a college football game between the Montana Grizzlies and Portland State Vikings on Saturday at Washington-Grizzly Stadium. The Whitefish grad has kept playing football through three knee surgeries and will soon pursue medical school.

Northern Arizona in Missoula. He got his second start a month later on national TV against UC Davis.

A dose of excitement was added to his typical pregame nerves after he had played on special teams and as a backup offensive lineman before this season.

"It was honestly kind of relieving just not to say it was a waste of time," he said. "It was a relief knowing that I put in all that time and effort and it finally got to pay off."

Knee injuries are nothing new for Botner.

He dislocated the kneecap on his right leg in eighth grade playing baseball due to the rotation of his body while swinging the bat. He popped it back into place, wore a brace and thought he wouldn't need surgery.

About eight months later, he dislocated that same kneecap while playing basketball. That led to his first surgery.

"One of the gifts from my lovely

mother is she used to dislocate her patellas, too, so I got that from her," he deadpanned.

He wasn't having any problems with his knee as he began to play sports at Whitefish High School. Then he collided knee to knee with another player on the basketball court. His kneecap dislocated again. This time it was his left knee. He went through another patellar tendon graft surgery.

"It was honestly kind of relieving just not to say it was a waste of time. It was a relief knowing that I put in all that time and effort and it finally got to pay off."

Dillon Botner,
Montana offensive lineman

See BOTNER, PAGE 6

Morrison displays versatility

California native serves as both kicker, punter in first season at Montana

FRANK GOGOLA
406 MT Sports

Dual-threat is a term that is typically used to describe certain quarterbacks on the football field, but it's also an applicable descriptor for Montana's Ty Morrison.

Morrison's versatility has allowed him to be the field goal kicker and punter for the Grizzlies. He's the first UM player to handle both of those duties for any extended time in a single season since Brody McKnight in 2011. He was even named the Big Sky special teams player of the week in the season opener.

Morrison, a native of Valencia, California, has made 11 of his 16 field goal attempts, including eight of 10 inside Washington-Grizzly Stadium, the sixth-most makes in the Big Sky. He's hit 45 of his 46 extra-point attempts, making 45 straight since he missed his first one off the upright. He's also averaged 42 yards per punt, the eighth-best mark in the conference.

He's the latest standout specialist in a long line of them under head coach Bobby Hauck, who is also the special teams coordinator. Brian Buschini and Patrick Rohrbach won the FCS punter of the year award in 2021 and 2022, while kicker Kevin Macias was an All-American in 2021 who set the UM records for career field goal percentage and consecutive made field goals.

Morrison joined UM after he sat out the 2023 season. He had spent 2021 and 2022 at College of the Canyons, a junior college in California. He hit 9 of 18 field goals, 28 of 30 PATs and averaged 34 yards per punt as a freshman. He was then All-Northern Conference first team as a sophomore, making 12 of 15 field goals, 30 of



SHANNA MADISON, MISSOULIAN

Montana Grizzlies kicker/punter Ty Morrison (36) warms up before a college football game between the Montana Grizzlies and Portland State Vikings on Saturday in Washington Grizzly Stadium. Morrison is in his first season at UM after transferring from College of the Canyons.

32 extra points and averaging 35.8 yards per punt.

Morrison sat down with 406 MT Sports prior to Montana's game against Montana State at noon on Saturday in Bozeman. This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.

Q: Can you take me back to your high school recruiting and how you ended up at College of the Canyons?

A: "Coming out of high school, it was kind of rough because my senior year, we only had five games due to COVID. I had a preferred walk-on to Nevada, and I didn't want to have to go there and go to a subpar school with not a great fan

base and not a very good winning tradition. I decided to go to my local junior college, which College of the Canyons is one of the best in the nation, especially for getting guys out. The coaching staff there was great and helped me eventually find (Montana) coach (Bobby) Hauck and get up here, and then coach Hauck has helped me develop from there."

Q: How did your time there end up going?

A: "My freshman year, after our third game — I had a good game, went five of five on field goals — and then at practice on Monday, I got hurt, I got a high ankle sprain. I still had to kick because

we didn't have any other kickers, but I was not very good because I couldn't really kick a ball, so that definitely hindered my ability all the way up until about Week 9 or 10. After that, I came back for my sophomore year and had a decent year.

"I had to take last year off because of certain issues with classes coming out and certain credits not transferring over, originally to San Diego State. Then the whole coaching staff left, and then UCLA, and then the whole coaching staff left there. Then I was blessed enough to find a great spot like Montana with great facilities, great coaching staff and a winning

tradition, which is something that I value."

Q: What did you end up doing in the 2023 season if you weren't on a team?

A: "I stayed there, helped coach the kickers there. I'd been in touch with coach Hauck and (Montana linebackers) coach (Roger) Cooper for almost a year and a half before I ended up coming here. Pretty much just lifting, getting stronger and working on my craft. That's how I filled my time. Did a little bit of fishing here and there too. Got decent, no, not decent, I'm pretty bad at golf, but I started to do it."

See MORRISON, PAGE 7

HOW WE SEE THE BIG SKY

406 MT Sports writers like Bobcats to cage the Grizzlies

BILL SPELTZ
406 MT Sports

Home has been pretty sweet lately for the hosting team in the Montana-Montana State football rivalry.

The last time the visiting team won was six years ago in a game many consider the most memorable Brawl of the Wild ever played. Of course, most who believe that favor blue and gold attire on game day.

Just to refresh your memory, the year was 2018 and the Cats were playing the Griz at cold but sunny Washington-Grizzly Stadium. Montana State appeared doomed after an apparent Adam Eastwood go-ahead rushing touchdown for the Griz with seconds left. But not so fast!

Montana State coach Jeff Choate called timeout before the play started. Montana was forced to try again and opted for the same play with a disastrous result. Tucker Yates knocked the ball out of Eastwood's hands and the Griz turned the ball over near the goal line in front of 26,508 fans.

It wasn't just that play that made the game hard for Montana to swallow. And Eastwood most certainly was not the only reason the Grizzlies lost. Montana led 22-0 in the first half and 25-15 with under 8 minutes left before the Cats made an epic comeback fueled by Troy Andersen's offensive heroics. The Cats came away with a 29-25 win.

Montana State has enjoyed historic success this season and goes into Saturday's game as a decided favorite. The Cats are real good at high-percentage stuff offensively. Namely, running the opposition ragged with a dangerous ground game, the likes of which has been seldom seen in Big Sky play in recent years.

Montana State could win Saturday even if Lady Luck is not on its side. Mostly be-



SHAWN RAECKE, FOR THE BOZEMAN DAILY CHRONICLE

Montana State quarterback Tommy Mellott is corralled by former Montana linebacker Braxton Hill (left) and current Griz safety Jaxon Lee (25) in last year's Brawl of the Wild at Washington-Grizzly Stadium. The Grizzlies won, 37-7.

cause the offense is capable of big numbers and the defense is stout. Montana needs a lot of stuff to come together to pull an upset, from putting everything together at a position that's been inconsistent (quarterback) to playing the best defensive game of its season.

On paper, Montana State is the better team. But games are not played on paper. Montana could get on a roll and MSU could turn the ball over a few times early and boom, we've got ourselves a tight ball game.

That's what I'm hoping for Saturday. But I'm not holding my breath.

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

No. 9 Montana (5-2, 8-3) at No. 2 Montana State (7-0, 11-0), noon. TV: Scripps Sports/ESPN+. After watching the Grizzlies and Cats last Saturday, it's hard to pick Montana in this one. The Griz defense surrendered 213 rushing yards at home against mediocre Portland State, so how is it going to do against the best rushing offense in the country? Montana will likely stack the box, but we saw what MSU quarterback Tommy Mellott was capable of doing passing the football at UC Davis. There's just a lot of things that have to go

just right for the Grizzlies to pull a massive upset in Bozeman. Plus it's not like Montana needs to win to get into the playoffs, so that motivation is not a factor. This is the Cats' year — they've already secured at least a share of the Big Sky title — and they're not going to let the Grizzlies taint their best regular season ever with a loss at home on senior day. **Speltz:** Bobcats 31, Grizzlies 27. **Gogola:** Montana State 42, Montana 28. **Flores:** Cats 45, Griz 13.

No. 7 Idaho (5-2, 8-3) at Idaho State (3-4, 5-6), 4 p.m. TV: ESPN+. The Bengals have a chance to finish their season with a bang by knocking off their rival. They'll be amped up for sure but their defense is not strong enough to contain the Vandals. Last week Idaho State surrendered 77 points in a loss at Eastern Washington. Idaho won't score as many but will score enough. **Speltz:** Vandals 34, Bengals 27. **Gogola:** Idaho 41, Idaho State 24. **Flores:** Idaho 35, ISU 27.

No. 5 UC Davis (6-1, 9-2) at Sacramento State (1-6, 3-8), 3 p.m. TV: ESPN+. The Aggies have a lot of motivation for this one as they jockey for the best possible playoff draw. The Hornets are playing strictly for pride but something

tells me they're going to push their heavily favored rival. Remember, Davis barely escaped with a 27-26 win at Portland State last month. The Aggies' pass defense is just vulnerable enough for Sac State to rack up some points. But Davis will prevail on the road. **Speltz:** Aggies 41, Hornets 30. **Gogola:** UC Davis 49, Sacramento State 13. **Flores:** Davis 42, Sac State 10.

Eastern Washington (3-4, 4-7) at No. 21 Northern Arizona (5-2, 7-4), 1 p.m. The Lumberjacks have a lot on the line as they make their case for a playoff berth. They'll take a four-game win streak into their regular season home finale. NAU is a perfect 4-0 at Walkup Skydome this season and even though the Eagles have pushed the Big Sky's best teams, they're not going to beat the Lumberjacks on senior day. **Speltz:** Jacks 40, Eagles 30. **Gogola:** Eastern Washington 45, Northern Arizona 38. **Flores:** NAU 35, EWU 31.

Cal Poly (2-5, 3-7) at Weber State (2-5, 3-8), 1 p.m. TV: ESPN+. The Wildcats have one of the best running backs in the Big Sky in Damon Bankston. He averages over 100 yards a game. Taking that into consideration, and the fact the warm-weather Mustangs aren't used to playing in even 45-degree weather, it seems like a no-brainer to go with the home team. Granted, Weber State hasn't won since its stunner at Montana on Oct. 5. I still like the Wildcats to win this one after the way they put a scare into playoff-bound Idaho in Moscow last Saturday. **Speltz:** Wildcats 35, Mustangs 21. **Gogola:** Weber State 27, Cal Poly 17. **Flores:** Weber 24, Cal Poly 17.

Northern Colorado (1-6, 1-10) at Portland State (2-5, 2-8), 2 p.m. The Vikings have given some good football teams fits this season. They played Davis and Idaho tough at home and played Montana tough on the road for a half, leading 3-0 at intermission. That leads me to believe they'll take care of business in their season finale. UNC and PSU are the worst in the Big Sky defensively. The difference is that Portland State has much more offensive firepower. **Speltz:** Vikings 48, Bears 28. **Gogola:** Portland State 35, Northern Colorado 10. **Flores:** PSU 38, UNC 7.

Bill Speltz is Missoulian sports editor. Contact him at bill.speltz@406mtsports.com or on Twitter @billspeltz

Botner

From 3

He bounced back to earn an offer from the Griz in his senior year. He signed in December 2018, joining a program he hadn't known about growing up in North Dakota until moving in middle school. He went from playing in front of about 1,000 people in Whitefish to a crowd of regularly 26,000 in Missoula.

He also went to playing for Griz head coach Bobby Hauck, whose spring camp, fall camp and winter conditioning made knee rehab seem like a piece of cake.

"Besides some of the military specialty trainings like SEALs or Green Berets, I think a coach Hauck football program is one of the hardest things you can do just mentally and physically," he said. "It is physically and mentally a grind. The only reason people get through it is because of the teammates. We have one of the closest-knit group of guys in our locker room because it's tough."

Botner came to UM as an undersized offensive lineman, weighing just 212 pounds at the end of fall camp his freshman year. He worked to put on and maintain weight, which he felt has been his biggest struggle over the years.

He had finally gotten up to an ideal weight of about 290 pounds going into 2023 fall camp. That made the season-ending injury more agonizing for him because he had put himself in a position to potentially earn more playing time.

He dropped to 270 pounds after the surgery and worked his way back to 290 pounds in his 6-foot-6 frame this fall. The grafts in his knee have also held up after that hit from Hill.

"The grafts had been great for years," he said. "I never had any problems with my

"What they're able to do nowadays to keep people's careers alive and fix up the problems they have, I thought it's actually really cool. The science behind it, I really got into it."

Dillon Botner, Montana offensive lineman

knees. Then Braxton Hill went into the side of my leg and they weren't strong enough for him."

Botner's knee injuries got him interested in the medical field.

His job shadowed Dr. James Blasingame in the summer following his surgery in high school. Blasingame had performed the first surgery, he and Dr. Benjamin Ward did the second one, while Ward did the third one last year.

Botner had previously thought about becoming a pilot like his father, who got to know Blasingame through being a medevac pilot, he said. However, he got turned down by the service academies because he was too tall.

"I had been through it, so it was cool seeing the other side of it and what goes into it," he said. "The human body's pretty incredible. What they're able to do nowadays to keep people's careers alive and fix up the problems they have, I thought it's actually really cool. The science behind it, I really got into it."

He has already earned two bachelor's degrees with magna cum laude distinction and will get his third at the end of this semester. The first came in biochemistry in spring 2023, then biology with a minor in physics in fall 2023 and he'll soon add one in molecular neuroscience.

Balancing football and those classes — his favorite was intro to physics and most challenging was organic chemistry II — has been a challenge, especially because some classes are offered only during times the team practices. He's

worked with professors and academic advisors to make things possible, like taking classes online or out of order, he said.

Botner will finish school at UM in December. He'll then focus on preparing to take the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) in the spring. He could get a medical waiver to play another season at UM but thinks six years is enough.

"Seven years of undergrad is a little much," he said. "Especially if I want to go to med school, I got a lot left ahead of me. I think the program's going to be in a good place. I don't think they need my old ass hanging around anymore."

Botner thinks he wants to specialize in orthopedics while in medical school. He'll have a personal story to tell his future patients who may be going through the same injuries he's experienced.

He may even show them the video of that collision with Hill, which he keeps on his phone. He has kept a good attitude after that injury and is now one of eight remaining players out of the 28 true freshmen who came to UM in 2019.

"I think that's probably the only reason I came back was because of the guys," he said. "Obviously, I wanted to play and didn't want to go out like that. But the real reason is the fellowship and being around the team."

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.



SHANNA MADISON, MISSOULIAN

Montana Grizzlies offensive lineman Dillon Botner (60) warms up before a college football game between the Montana Grizzlies and Portland State Vikings on Saturday at Washington Grizzly Stadium. The sixth-year senior made his first career start in the Oct. 12 win over Northern Arizona in Missoula.

Morrison

From 4

Q: How did the recruiting go down with Montana?

A: "Coach Hauck was actually at a San Diego State kicking camp. He found me there, and as soon as the camp was over, he went over and introduced himself to my parents. After that, we talked on the phone a bunch, then I started talking to coach Cooper. Eventually in January of last year, I came on a visit, decided I loved it and committed the next day. It was pretty easy for me to commit here, especially seeing how great the fan base is, how great the facilities are and just overall how beautiful the entire city is."

Q: You have been doing kicking and punting for a while now, so what's the biggest difference between them and biggest challenge handling both?

A: "It's a different swing. There are plenty of guys that do it and

are successful. Punting is more linear versus kicking is very rotational. In the same game, it can be difficult to transition, but when you're doing it for long enough, you kind of get a feel for it. I'm trying to go out and do it at the highest level that I can."

Q: Passing on that Nevada offer and now ending up here at Montana, what has it meant to you to be a part of this historically successful program?

A: "It's meant everything. We're having a pretty good year. Obviously, we would have liked to come away with a couple more victories. We're still in it and we're still looking to go and get back to where we were last year. Just looking to win, like it's expected here. I'm trying to contribute the best I can to that."

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.



BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

Montana punter Ty Morrison (36) attempts an extra point during the college football game between Montana and Morehead State on Sept. 14 at Washington-Grizzly Stadium in Missoula.



SHANNA MADISON, MISSOULIAN

Montana Grizzlies kicker/punter Ty Morrison (36) warms up before a college football game between the Montana Grizzlies and Portland State Vikings on Saturday in Washington-Grizzly Stadium. He's the first Griz to handle both punts and field goals in the same season since Brody McKnight in 2011.

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