MONTANA AT MONTANA STATE • KICKOFF: 2 P.M. SATURDAY • TV: ABC • THURSDAY, DEC. 18, 2025

GRAZINE DAY

BIGSKY ON CENTRAL STATE OF THE STATE OF THE

Toyio Pocker In finds

Senior Stevie Rocker Jr. finds purpose bigger than himself

BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

Q&A WITH QB KEALI'I AH YAT, PAGE 3 O SPELTZ PICKS THE BIG SKY, PAGE 4 O ROSTERS, PAGE 5

Strength Within

Wellness Throughout



THE CENTER

of all we do

Missoulian

Division of Health Care Service Corporation, a Mutual Legal Reserve Company, an Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

ROCKER ROLLING

Arizona native enjoys career season at RB after saving child's life

FRANK GOGOLA 406 MT Sports

tevie Rocker Jr. ran toward the visitor sideline on a wheel route at Washington-Grizzly Stadium, hauled in a pass from Keali'i Ah Yat and raced to the north end zone for a touchdown in the second round of the playoffs.

It was the first postseason score for Rocker, a fifth-year college football player who scored twice that day in his second season at Montana after he began his career in the FBS with the Arizona Wildcats, who were then in the Pac-12.

It's been a career season across the board for the running back and Arizona native who had put on hold the offseason preparation for his final year of eligibility so he could try to help save a life by donating bone marrow.

"That's just how I've always been raised," he said ahead of Montana's semifinal game against Montana State at 2 p.m. Saturday in Bozeman.

"Whether it's somebody just needs help with groceries into their car or whatever it may be, it's one of those where it's just good karma. Regardless if I'm going to get something out of it or not, it makes me feel better knowing that somebody else got the help that they needed.

"And the situation of the bone marrow donation, that is like the epitome of what you want to do. That is top tier. There's no reason I shouldn't do it."

Rocker's selfless act helped one of the most vulnerable: a child. It was a 6-year-old boy in Argentina who got the donation from Rocker, whose bones were so dense his surgery took two hours instead of the normal 30 minutes.

He matched through the Griz football team's annual enrollment drive for the National Marrow Donor Program's "Get in the game" registry. He got the call that a match was found and he flew to Kansas City in April for the procedure.

There's the chance he could meet the kid after a year of checkups, which monitor that



BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

Montana running back Stevie Rocker Jr. (21) runs the ball during the college football game against Morehead State on Sept. 14, 2024, at Washington-Grizzly Stadium in Missoula. The Arizona native has scored seven touchdowns during his two seasons with the Grizzlies.



BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

Montana quarterback Keali'i Ah Yat (8) rushes for a touchdown against Eastern Washington safety Drew Carter (28) during the college football game on Nov. 8 at Washington-Grizzly Stadium in Missoula. He has rushed for seven touchdowns this season.

Ah Yat crafts historic season

Sophomore quarterback guides Grizzlies in first year as full-time starter

CARSON CASHION | 406 MT SportsTo his first season as Montana's full-time

starter, redshirt sophomore quarterback Keali'i Ah Yat has lived up to his name. The son of Grizzly Sports Hall of Fame quarterback Brian Ah Yat, Keali'i has thrown for 3,819 yards in 14 games this year. He reached a season high in yardage during the second round of the FCS playoffs against South Dakota State, logging 360 passing yards as well as four passing touchdowns. He's been named the Big Sky offensive player of the week twice, first for his numbers against Indiana State and then against Sacred Heart, and he's thrown just one interception in his last six contests.

He was named to the All-Big Sky first team in November. He found the end zone twice in Montana's first matchup with the Cats, throwing one touchdown and scoring another with his legs. Ah Yat sat down with 406 MT Sports ahead of Montana's FCS semifinal matchup with Montana State at 2 p.m. Saturday in Bozeman. This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.

Please see AH YAT, Page 7

HOW WE SEE THE BIG SKY

BILL SPELTZ 406 MT Sports

That a wonderful spectacle it promises to be Saturday afternoon at Bobcat Stadium.

Not just because there's more riding on the Brawl of the Wild's first playoff



BILL SPELTZ

86-13



CARSON CASHION

82-17



FRANK GOGOLA

80-19



FLORES

78-21

version than any other version since the rivalry's inception in 1897. But also because it's so evenly matched, spiking the excitement and anxiety.

> It feels like the final round of the Masters, with two champions locked in a tie atop the leaderboard. One little hiccup — a turnover, a penalty that negates a big play, a poorly placed punt, a missed assignment — could mean the difference between heading to the FCS title game as the favorite on Jan. 5 and heading home for Christmas.

It promises to be tense and spellbinding and it's fun to ponder who might emerge as the hero. The easy choices are the quarterbacks that have been heroic all season but it could be anyone from a running back to a defensive back to a kicker or kick returner.

It's easily the biggest instate sporting event since I arrived in Montana 20 years ago. It may very well lead to the first FCS championship for a Treasure State team since I arrived in these parts two decades

Illinois State or Villanova, who play one another in Saturday's other semifinal, may have something to say about that in two weeks in Nashville. We don't want to disrespect those teams.

It's just feels like the time is right for the state of Montana to break through and win it all for the first time in 24 years.

One thing we learned from the Brawl of the Wild last month is the quarter-



JUPITER FLOROS, BOZEMAN DAILY CHRONICLE

Montana and Montana State will face off in the FCS playoff semifinal round on Saturday at 2 p.m. in Bozeman. The winner will be the favorite to win the national championship, which will be held on Jan. 5 in Nashville, Tennessee.

backs for the Grizzlies and Cats can both burn the opposition with scrambling. That's the part of the game that's toughest for coaches to prepare for because it's improvisational. It figures to be the X factor this Saturday.

Look for Montana and Montana State's ground games to cancel each other out. Both defenses will dare the opposition to throw the football. The Cats are better at dinking and dunking and the Grizzlies have more big-play potential with their aerial attack.

One thing to keep in mind with the Grizzlies is they really haven't experienced what I consider a hostile environment on the road this season. The Cats did when they traveled to Oregon and then of course in Washington-Grizzly Stadium on Nov. 22. The closest Montana came was a game at Sacramento State, where 16,816 fans turned out to watch the Grizzlies earn a 49-35 win.

Montana may have a false start or two as it adjusts to the roaring crowd. Then again, it's not as loud there as it is at Washington-Grizzly Stadium because the venue has a different configuration.

No one on this planet is more starved for an FCS title than Montana's head coach Bobby Hauck. He's 0-4 in championship games and deep in his heart you have to believe he believes his time has come. Likewise, the Cats probably figure they're due after finishing runner-up two of the last four seasons, including last January.

We'll see. No one knows for certain what is going to go down and that's the beauty of it. Since I'm an Iowa boy at heart, I'm simply hoping for a close game. I admire the players on both sides and will continue to admire them after it's over.

Regardless of which team comes out on top, here's hoping the winning team will serve as a role model to the young athletes in our state by showing sportsmanship. We all win and lose epic battles over the course of our lives. Doing it with dignity sets the best of us apart from the

No. 3 seed Montana (13-1) at No. 2 seed Montana State (12-2), 2 p.m., TV: ABC.

The Cats won the last matchup 31-28 on a day when the Grizzlies did very little to help their cause on special teams. That's the part of the game that's going to be different this time around. I really believe it. Montana has found success returning kicks and haunting opposing punters/kickers in the postseason. It's a somewhat unique team trait. All

things being even, and these two teams truly do seem even to me, special teams can make a world of difference. That said, even a special teams blunder can be overcome. The two players most critical to the outcome other than the quarterbacks are Montana running back Eli Gillman and Montana State running back Adam Jones, the pride of Missoula Sentinel High. One of those dudes is going to have a big day. Bank on it. There are no easy answers when it comes to picking this game. There are too many variables. In looking at the situation objectively, I think Montana has been more effective in all three phases the past two weeks and, combined with dangerous special teams, is going to come away with the Brawl's biggest win in Bozeman. Of course, I've been wrong before. In fact, all the 406 pickers were wrong in forecasting the Nov. 22 Brawl at Washington-Grizzly Stadium. One of us will get it right this time because we're not in agreement about the victor. Speltz: Grizzlies 35, Bobcats 34. Cashion: Montana 38, Montana State 35. Gogola: Griz 36, Cats 20. Flores: Cats 34, Griz 27.

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

MONTANA GRIZZLIES

No.	Name	Year	Pos.	Ht.	wt.	Hometown	23	Rashid Mansour	Jr.	СВ	6-0	163	Fresno, Calif.	60	Dillon Botner	Gr.	OL	6-6	280	Whitefish, Mont.
0	Monte Gillman	R-Fr.	WR	5-8	162	Dassel, Minn.	24	Diezel Wilkinson	So.	S	6-0	193	Spokane, Wash.	61	Lincoln Hoefer	Fr.	OL	6-6	279	Everson, Wash.
0	Terahiti Wolfe	So.	S	5-11	173	Kahalu'u, Hawaii	25	Brady Beaner	Fr.	S	6-0	187	Anacortes, Wash.	62	Everett Johnson	R-Sr.	OL	6-7	290	Turlock, Calif.
2	Drew Deck	R-Sr.	WR	5-9	165	Kalispell, Mont.	26	Chase Cook	Fr.	RB	5-11	198	Red Lodge, Mont.	63	Kaikoa Kanakaole	Fr.	OL	6-5	335	Kapa'a, Hawaii
2	Micah Harper	R-Sr.	S	5-10	194	Chandler, Ariz.	28	Hashim Jones	Fr.	RB	6-0	208	Hartford, Conn.	64	Matt Hilden	R-Fr.	OL	6-6	309	Santa Rosa, Calif.
3	Brooks Davis	R-Fr.	WR	6-0	174	Brentwood, Calif.	29	Tanner Huff	R-Sr.	S	6-0	210	Butte, Mont.	65	Dylan Jemtegaard	R-Sr.	OL	6-4	281	Yelm, Wash.
3	Jeilani Davis	R-Fr.	S	6-0	204	Inglewood, Calif.	30	Kade Cutler	R-Jr.	S	6-0	200	Phillipsburg, Mont.	66	Ezra Meyer	Fr.	OL	6-5	290	Missoula, Mont.
4	Blake Bohannon	R-Sr.	WR	6-1	195	Woodstock, Ga.	30	Tommy Running Rabbit	R-Fr.	RB	6-1	195	Browning, Mont.	68	Torin Jeske	R-Fr.	OL	6-6	271	Bozeman, Mont.
4	Dane Parker	R-Fr.	S	6-1	175	Puyallup, Wash.	31	Geno Leonard	R-Sr.	LB	5-11	230	Missoula, Mont.	69	Cannon Panfiloff	R-Sr.	OL	6-6	294	Roy, Utah
5	Ian Finch	R-Jr.	WR	6-3	209	Missoula, Mont.	32	Peyton Wing	Jr.	LB	6-0	229	Sumner, Wash.	70	Colin Amick	R-Fr.	OL	6-6	292	Sammamish, Wash.
5	Kyon Loud	So.	CB	6-2	175	San Mateo, Calif.	33	Taylor Jones	Fr.	LB	6-1	205	Missoula, Mont.	71	Quinlan Hyatt	Fr.	OL	6-7	285	Spokane, Wash.
6	Prince Ford	R-Sr.	CB	5-11	170	Concord, N.C.	34	Talen Reynolds	R-Fr.	RB	5-11	170	Missoula, Mont.	72	Cade Klimczak	Gr.	OL	6-1	285	Rockford, Mich.
6	Michael Wortham	R-Sr.	WR	5-9	190	North Highlands, Calif.	35	Grady Walker	R-Fr.	LB	6-4	224	Missoula, Mont.	73	Trevor Steinbach	R-Fr.	OL	6-5	300	Sammamish, Wash.
7	Malae Fonoti	R-Fr.	RB	5-11	207	Laie, Hawaii	36	Ty Morrison	Sr.	KP	6-3	220	Valencia, Calif.	74	Tate Templeton	R-So.	OL	6-3	290	Missoula, Mont.
7	Kash Goicoechea	R-Fr.	S	6-1	197	Kalispell, Mont.	36	Garrett Speer	R-Fr.	DB	6-0	191	Sherwood, Ore.	75	Jose Balver-Mendoza	R-Fr.	OL	6-5	287	Athens, Ga.
8	Keali'i Ah Yat	R-So.	QB	6-1	200	Kaneohe, Hawaii	37	Clay Oven	R-So.	LB	6-2	216	Billings, Mont.	76	Patrick Matan	Gr.	OL	6-4	295	Chevy Chase, Md.
8	Kenzel Lawler	R-Sr.	CB	6-0	190	Corona, Calif.	38	Caleb Moran	So.	LB	6-1	210	Milton, Ga.	77	Carter Bowen	Jr.	OL	6-7	318	Dawson, Minn.
9	Justus Breston	Sr.	CB	5-11	178	Atlanta, Ga.	39	Fynn Ridgeway	R-So	S	6-1	204	Whitefish, Mont.	78	Lucas Freitas	R-So.	OL	6-6	318	Snoqualmie, Wash.
9	Jordan Dever	R-So.	WR	6-0	174	Spokane, Wash.	40	Colton Lentz	Fr.	LB	6-3	213	Nooksack, Wash.	79	Liam Brown	R-Sr.	OL	6-5	316	Beaverton, Ore.
10	Eli Gillman	R-Jr.	RB	6-0	213	Dassel, Minn.	42	Giovanni Pifferini	Jr.	DL	6-4	230	Placerville, Calif.	80	Jammel Ward	Fr.	WR	6-4	170	Nacogdoches, Texas
10	TJ Rausch	R-Sr.	S	6-3	208	Missoula, Mont.	43	Grayson Pibal	R-Sr.	LS	6-3	214	Clackamas, Ore.	81	Josh Gale	R-Sr.	TE	6-4	243	Gilbert, Ariz.
11	Cameron Gurnsey	R-So.	WR	6-1	197	Butte, Mont.	44	Titus Rohrer	R-Jr.	TE	6-7	240	Bryan, Ohio	84	Evan Shafer	Gr.	TE	6-5	270	Connersville, Ind.
11	Elijawah Tolbert	R-Sr.		6-1	232	Chicago, III.	45	Caleb Otlewski	R-So.	LB	6-4	241	Melissa, Texas	85	Bridger Smith	Fr.	WR		170	Kalispell, Mont.
12	Elijah Brady	R-So.	CB	6-1	172	Seattle, Wash.	46	Jo Silver	R-Jr.	KP	6-0	213	Fremont, Ohio	86	Weston Adams	R-Jr.	WR	5-11	192	Shell, Wyo.
12	Gage Sliter	R-So.	QB	6-1	193	Kalispell, Mont.	47	Kellen Detrick	R-Sr.	DE	6-3	240	Havre, Mont.	87	Jake Olson	R-Sr.	TE	6-7		Butte, Mont.
13	Brock Beaner	Fr.	S	6-0	193	Anacortes, Wash.	48	Styles Goodman	Fr.	LB		234	Austin, Texas	89	Danny Sirmon	R-Fr.	TE	6-6		Missoula, Mont.
13	Lekeldrick Bridges	R-Fr.		5-11		Cedar Hill, Texas	49	Isaac Keim	R-Fr.	DL		265	Kalispell, Mont.	90	Jareb Ramos	R-Jr.	DL	6-4		Centennial, Colo.
14	DeAnte Gentry	Fr.		5-11	169	Fort Worth, Texas	50	Sam Merriman	Fr.	LB	6-0	225	Seattle, Wash.	91	Cooper Buffington	Fr.	DL	6-4	252	Winfield, Iowa
14	Korbin Hendrix	R-So.		6-3	192	McKinney, Texas	51	Spencer Tripp	Fr.	DL	5-11		Missoula, Mont.	92	Zekiel Seumalo	Jr.	DL	6-0	265	Kent, Wash.
16	Jake Jensen	R-Sr.	•	6-1	215	Pleasant Grove, Utah	52	Cy Stevenson	R-So.	LB		220	Libby, Mont.	93	Cole Muilenburg	R-Fr.	DL	6-5	246	Gig Harbor, Wash.
17	Kade Boyd	R-So.		6-0	197	Billings, Mont.	54	Bridger Salvevold	Fr.	LB		207	Culbertson, Mont.	94	Cole Harpole	Fr.	DL	6-3	221	Gunter, Texas
17	Luke Flowers	R-Fr.	•	6-1	188	Rigby, Idaho	55	Austin Buehler	R-So.	OL	6-5	285	Helena, Mont.	95	Derek Moreland	Sr.	DL	6-1	262	Fresno, Calif.
18	Cody Schweikert	R-Fr.	•	6-3	212	Columbia Falls, Mont.	56	Hunter Peck	R-Sr.	DE	6-2	252	Windsor, Colo.	96	Logan Knaevelsrud	Fr.	DL	6-4	235	Snoqualmie, Wash.
19	Drew Price	Fr.	•	5-10	171	Jacksonville, Fla.	57	Jake Mason	R-So.	DL		250	Ferndale, Wash.	97	Hayden Schwartz	R-Jr.	DL	6-4	248	Jacksonville, Fla.
20	Sage Salopek	Fr.		6-0	168	Seattle, Wash.	58	Solomon Tuliaupupu	Gr.	LB		242	Pomona, Calif.	98	Matai Mata'afa	R-Sr.	DL	6-1	236	Lahaina, Hawaii
21	Stevie Rocker Jr.	R-Sr.	RB	6-0	210	Tucson, Ariz.	59	Hayden Opitz	R-So.	LB	6-2	230	Helena, Mont.	99	Braydon Bailey	R-Jr.	DL	6-2	280	Kona, Hawaii
											_					_		_		
								MONTAL	MA C	4 7/		30	RCATS							

MONTANA STATE BOBCATS

No.	Name	Year	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Hometown	22	Marcus Coleman II	Fr.	СВ	5-11	155	Spring, Texas	55	AJ Tanupo	R-Fr.	DT	6-2	280	Tacoma, Wash.
0	Takhari Carr	Jr.	DB	6-0	180	Compton, Calif.	22	Shanko Kornachuk	Fr.	RB	5-11	170	Lake Oswego, Ore.	56	Samora Ezekiel	Jr.	OL	6-2	295	Fort Worth, Texas
1	Chris Long	Sr.	WR	6-0	175	Willingboro, N.J.	23	Adam Jones	So.	RB	6-1	200	Missoula, Mont.	57	Everett Carr	So.	OL	6-4	305	Bozeman, Mont.
1	Jhase McMillan	R-Fr.	DB	5-9	170	Fulshear, Texas	24	Colter Petre	So.	DB	6-1	205	Helena, Mont.	58	Dominic Solano	So.	DE	6-4	250	Glendale, Ariz.
2	Taki Uluilakepa	So.	DB	6-0	175	Provo, Utah	24	Nick Seymour	Fr.	WR	5-11	175	Valencia, Calif.	60	Tommy Nilson	Jr.	OL	6-3	300	Missoula, Mont.
3	Kory Boyd	R-Fr.	DB	6-0	185	Dallas, Texas	25	Cale Breslin	Fr.	RB	5-11	205	Las Vegas, Nev.	61	Aiden Kaplan	R-Fr.	OL	6-3	277	Montgomery, Texas
3	Jared White	Jr.	RB	5-10	205	Frisco, Texas	25	Luke Oxarart	Fr.	DB	5-11	177	Montana City, Mont.	63	Dylan Rollins	So.	OL	6-6	300	Missoula, Mont.
4	Jacob Trimble	Jr.	WR	6-0	195	N. Richland Hills, Texas	26	Malachi Claunch	Fr.	RB	6-1	195	Billings, Mont.	64	Burke Mastel	So.	OL	6-4		Red Lodge, Mont.
5	Caden Dowler	Jr.	DB	6-0	205	Billings, Mont.	27	Brock Steel	Jr.	LB	6-1	220	Sheridan, Wyo.	65	Vaughn Wirkus	Fr.	OL		260	Helena. Mont.
5	Javonte King	So.	WR	6-4	220	Blackfoot, Idaho	28	Colson Coon	So.	RB	5-11	195	Sheridan, Wyo.	66	Titan Fleischmann	Jr.	OT	6-4		Pocatello, Idaho
6	Bryant Meredith	So.	DB	5-10	175	Concord, Calif.	29	JJ Dolan	So.	DB	6-0	185	Missoula, Mont.	68	Nate Thornton	Fr.	OL	6-4		Poulsbo, Wash.
6	River Warren	Fr.	QB	6-3	205	Edmond, Okla.	30	Colby Frokjer	Fr.	Р	6-3	185	West Haven, Utah	69	Jaren Perkins	Jr.	DT	6-1		Bozeman, Mont.
7	Tayden Gray	So.	DB	6-0	185	Arlington, Texas	31	Vinnie Souza	Fr.	LB	6-2	197	Billings, Mont.							
8	Justin Lamson	Jr.	QB	6-2	210	El Dorado Hills, Calif.	32	Julius Davis	Sr.	RB	5-10	210	Menomonie Falls, Wis.	72	Braden Zimmer	R-Fr.	0L	6-6		Billings, Mont.
8	Carson Williams	R-Fr.	DB	5-11	170	Houston, Texas	33	Mason Dethman	R-Fr.	DB	6-4	205	Brockton, Mont.	73	Cedric Jefferson	So.	OL		300	Temecula, Calif.
9	Seth Johnson	R-Fr.	DB	5-10	180	Frisco, Texas	34	Cole Taylor	So.	LB	6-3	230	Great Falls, Mont.	75	Ben Winters	Fr.	OL		326	Kalispell, Mont.
9	Ryan King	Sr.	WR	6-4		Loganville, Ga.	35	Tommy Springman	Fr.	TE	6-0	210	Bozeman, Mont.	79	Jonathan Luhmann	So.	OL	6-4	295	Florence, Mont.
10	Bryce Grebe	So.	LB	6-2		Melstone, Mont.	36	Zac Crews	Jr.	DE	6-4	240	Missoula, Mont.	80	Luvens Valcin	R-Fr.	TE	6-1	228	Auburn, Wash.
10	Jabez Woods	R-Fr.	WR	5-11		Spanaway, Wash.	37	Josh Woodberry	R-Fr.	LB	5-11	215	Bozeman, Mont.	81	Carter Cocke	Fr.	TE	6-3	240	Sumner, Wash.
11	Kenneth Eiden IV	Sr.	DE	6-1		Bozeman, Mont.	38	Michael Rubich	Fr.	K	6-0	190	Rock Springs, Wyo.	82	Luke Smith	So.	TE	6-5	230	Bozeman, Mont.
11	Maxwell Hendrick	Fr.	WR	5-11		Tomball, Texas	39	Myles Sansted	So.	K	6-3	188	Alexandria, Minn.	83	Kash Embry	Fr.	WR	5-11	175	Bozeman, Mont.
12	Ryan Bowles	R-Fr.	LB	6-2		Woodinville, Wash.	40	Brody Johnson	Fr.	LS		204	Peoria, Ariz.	84	Dane Steel	R-Fr.	WR	5-10	178	Sheridan, Wyo.
12	Jordan Reed	Jr.	WR	6-6		El Centro, Calif.	41	Paul Brott	Sr.	DT	6-3	300	Billings, Mont.	85	Carter Curnow	Fr.	TE	6-4	235	Dillon, Mont.
13	Jackson Harmon	Sr.	DB	6-3		Anchorage, Alaska	42	Ryan Krahe	Jr.	LB	6-2	230	Great Falls, Mont.	86	Hunter Provience	So.	TE	6-5	245	San Diego, Calif.
13	Chance Wilson	So.	QB	6-3		Owasso, Okla.	43	Xavier Ahrens	Fr.	LB	6-2	220	Tacoma, Wash.	87	Thomas Buchanan	R-Fr.	TE	6-4	225	Red Lodge, Mont.
14	Taco Dowler	Jr.	WR	5-9		Billings, Mont.	44	Jake Vigen	Jr.	DE	6-2	240	Bozeman, Mont.	88	Rylan Schlepp	So.	TE	6-4	235	Bozeman, Mont.
15	Patrick Duchien	So.	QB	6-2		Florence, Mont.	45	Hunter Parsons	Sr.	DE	6-4	245	Sparks, Nev.	89	Rocky Lencioni	R-Fr.	TE	6-3	240	Bozeman, Mont.
15	Ife Ohalete	Jr.	DB	5-11		Austin, Texas	46	Logan Fredericksen	So.	DE	6-3	240	Rigby, Idaho	90	Hunter Sharbono	So.	DT	6-2	280	Fairview, Mont.
16	Brendon Ross	R-Fr.	DB	5-10		Rockwall, Texas	47	George Helms	R-Fr.	RB		200	Big Sky, Mont.	91	Seth Brock	R-Fr.	DE	6-3		Eagle, Idaho
17	Hayden Gunlock	Fr.	DB	6-1		Meridian, Idaho	48	Blaine Downing	Fr.	DE	6-3	215	Saco, Mont.	92	Graysen Schneider	Fr.	DT	6-3		Stewartville, Minn.
17	Grant Vigen	Fr.	QB	6-6		Bozeman, Mont.	49	Zac Waible	So.	LB	6-2	215	Lake Oswego, Ore.	94	Josaiah Asuega	Fr.	DT.		305	Port Orchard, Wash.
18	Parker Mady	Fr.	WR	5-10		University Place, Wash.	50	Zack Black	Jr.	DT	6-4	275	Meridian, Idaho	96	Maior Thornhill	Fr.	DE	6-3		Gunter, Texas
18	Tim Thomas II	Fr.	DB	5-9		Houston, Texas	51	Dalton Noble	R-Fr.	OL.	6-4	285	Clancy, Mont.	97	Alec Eckert	Sr.	DT	6-2		Lewiston, Idaho
19	Tom Carter	So.	WR	6-0		Helena, Mont.	53	Nicholas Maloff	Fr.	OL	6-2	307	Meridian, Idaho							,
19	Neil Daily	Jr.	LB	6-3		Billings, Mont.	54	Zac Nyland	R-Fr.		6-4	300	Meridian, Idaho	98	Hudson Wiens	R-Fr.	DL	6-3		Bozeman, Mont.
20	Kee Christiansen	R-Fr.	WR	6-0	190	Dillon, Mont.	55	JT Reed	Sr.	OG	6-3	290	San Jose, Calif.	99	Talon Marsh	So.	DL	6-1	280	Helena, Mont.

Rocker

From page 2

things are going well. They might be separated by a language barrier, but to meet the family and exchange emotions would be worthwhile.

"Knowing this kid's gone through so much and he's only lived a portion of his life, if I can give him the chance to live his full potential, to sit there and be like, 'Man, I turned down an opportunity to give a kid an opportunity to live his dream,' I couldn't live with myself to turn that down," he said.

"I wanted to be able to kickstart his dream and like, 'Look, you don't have to worry about any more procedures, doctors, stuff like that. As long as this works out, you're going to live whatever you want to do.' So, I was like that's something you just could not say no to."

Rocker had that mentality of helping others instilled in him at a young age. He proved with his anonymous donation that he is more actions than words. His biggest influence in that aspect growing up was his mother, Sandra Rocker.

He saw how much she helped others by serving as the ever-busy business manager for some of his football teams. That included when he made the Tucson Youth Football and Spirit Federation 14U all-star team in Arizona.

He had started playing football, the flag version, at 5 years old. By 7 years old, he began a journey in the tackle game that took him to the University of Arizona as a 3-star recruit before his playing time fell off and he transferred.

"Everybody calls my mom 'Momma Rock' because she inherits everybody — even my friends, their parents — as family," he said. "She taught me to just give, give, give, and at some point, it's going to come back to you.

"You don't know how long or short it may be, but those things don't go unnoticed. So, you keep going and helping, and if it doesn't come around, it doesn't come around. But you know within your heart you're a good person."

Stevie also looked to his father, Stevie Rocker Sr., as both grew up playing football and basketball. While the elder went the basketball route, the younger Rocker found his passion lied in football while he just played hoops for fun.

He admired the commitment his father made by coaching him in football and going to clinics so he could pick up more about the sport, he said. He also learned about dedication from his father, who he said served in the Army.



BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

Montana running back Stevie Rocker Jr. (21) runs the ball during the college football game against Indiana State on Sept. 20 at Washington-Grizzly Stadium in Missoula. The fifth-year senior is having a career season across the board.

He even saw how both his parents sacrificed for him by switching up work schedules to take him to football camps. They also got him the SpeedFlex football helmet and Cam Newton high-top cleats he wanted.

"They just wanted to give me every opportunity to feel good about myself," he said. "They'd say, 'Look, we're giving you what you want, what you ask for, so just do the things we ask.' All the sacrifices they do, it's like, man, I feel like I can never give enough to even balance what they've done for me."

Rocker wears important reminders on his body with tattoos. On his right arm, he has "Rocker" on his forearm, "Blessed" on his elbow as well as "Jesus" and "EL-EISH" — everybody lives even if struggle happens — among others.

Those are just some of a long list of tattoos, three of which he drew using his love for creating art. He also loves music, particularly R&B and soul music to help him mellow out and not get too anxious

before football games.

While at UM, he has had the suffix "Jr." on the nameplate on the back of his jersey. It's become an important fixture after he didn't think about it much growing up as he went by Stevie and his father went by Steve, he said.

"It's just to know that my last name isn't just for me," he said. "It's a symbol of my dad and the family that we have that's not always around for us, and that's a huge deal. I just like to represent it in every way I can, and having the Jr. is a good representation of knowing I'm just a little version of him."

When Rocker is finished playing football, he'll add a pair of hanging cleats to the goal post tattooed on his right shoulder. It's to signify he's hanging up his cleats, although he isn't planning to be completely finished with football.

A psychololgy major, he wants to be a referee and work his way up as high as possible in the college or professional game. It's his way to stick around the game that

he loves and that has given him so much over the years.

While his playing days might not end on his terms in the NFL, he's learned more about who he is as a person off the field. He's hoping to get to know the child who he gave a chance to live and follow along to see who he becomes.

"I know for myself, if that's my kid, I would want to know and I would probably hunt them down every way I could to be like, 'You helped my kid in a way that you probably don't even know how much it means to us,'" he said.

"To them, this is their life, their family, their parents. I want to just shake the family's hands and just let them know it wasn't even a hesitation. I wanted to help every way I could."

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.

Ah Yat

From page 3

Q: Do you have any memories of coming to Montana football games growing up with your dad?

A: I came to one Griz game when I was a little kid, it was because my cousin played for Weber State. Only one game, I don't really remember anything about it, though.

Q: How quickly was Montana involved in your recruitment process?

A: They were the first ones, I would say. I came up to a camp going into my junior year of high school, and they showed interest right away. They always stayed in contact with me and just kept building their relationship with me, showing their interest in me. They were always on my list, and they finally offered me after my junior season. I knew they were loyal to me, and I was trying to be loyal to them.

Q: What do you remember from those visits?

A: I came in the summer, it was cool. My dad obviously played here, so he got to kind of explain some stuff, show me around town, and I got to meet his friends, obviously the coaches. So it was a good experience.

Q: What do you think you learned the most from your redshirt season in Missoula?

A: Just to always be ready. Just keep working hard, no matter what the situation is. Always put your head down and work because you never know. Always control what you can control.

Q: Looking back on last season now that you've got a full year as the fulltime starter under your belt, what do you think you took from last year that's been the most helpful?

A: Just experience. Learning about the game and a lot about the game we played, learning about your mistakes. I just took the good and the bad, and just kept stacking on top of that and just worked.

Q: Montana added a lot of new faces to the offense this season like Michael Wortham and Brooks Davis. Was there any moment before the season or in the early stages of the season you knew the unit could be as explosive as it's been?

A: I would just say throughout fall camp. We worked extremely hard together in the summer, getting chemistry with everybody, and we all connected well together. We're all good friends outside of football. I think during fall camp, when we just kind of continued to build as an offense as a whole, I knew could be something good.

Q: When you first moved here, what was the adjustment to Missoula like for you?



BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

A: It was great. The community was great. Obviously, I had to get used to the cold weather, but I think I've adjusted finally to that, and it's been nothing but great. I'm just super grateful that I'm here.

Q: What's the most valuable advice your dad has given you since you got to Missoula?

A: Just to be yourself, be a leader on the field. Continue to work with the guys, get close with the guys, and just keep working and control what I can control. Don't worry about any outside-noise distractions, just focus on the main thing I'd say.

Q: I know Malae Fonoti was playing high-school ball in Hawai'i at the same time you were for a couple years and you played a couple games against him, did you know him at all when he was coming to Montana?

A: Not really, not really a relationship. I knew of him because he was doing well back home.

Q: Did you win those games?

A: No, we got our asses kicked. They had a really good team that year.

Q: What do you miss most about home?

A: The home cooking food over there cannot be topped, in my opinion. Just the food and the warm weather and the beaches,

Q: Any meals that you're thinking of when you say that?

A: Just rice, anything with rice. I miss rice.

Montana quarterback Keali'i Ah Yat (8) runs as Montana State's Seth Johnson (9) tackles him on Nov. 22 at Washington-Grizzly Stadium. He has thrown 32 touchdowns this season.



First chair still means something here.

Lock in your 2025-2026 **Season Pass before prices** increase for unbeatable value. more days on the mountain, and first tracks all winter long.

- Adult \$549 (ages 18-64)
- Youth \$399 (ages 7-17)
- Senior \$399 (ages 65-79)
- College \$159 (full time 9+ credits, ages 18-35)
- Transferable Season Pass \$1250

Prices Increase 11/22/2025



Get Your Season Pass Today!









