MONTANA AT MONTANA STATE • KICKOFF: NOON SATURDAY • TV: MTN • THURSDAY, NOV. 19, 2026

GRIZZLY GAME DAY

Missoulian



BUILT SANDFORD TOUGH

OL WYATT SANDFORD BEATS FLESH-EATING BACTERIA

BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

Q&A WITH OL TORIN JESKE, PAGE 3 • SPELTZ PICKS THE BIG SKY, PAGE 4 • ROSTERS, PAGE 5

STRONG-WILLED SANDFORD

O-lineman rises up from Carroll to role with Griz

FRANK GOGOLA
406 MT Sports



BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

Montana offensive lineman Wyatt Sandford (60) warms up before the college football game against Idaho State on Nov. 14 at Washington-Grizzly Stadium in Missoula. Sandford has been a backup offensive lineman in his final college season after he transferred from NAIA Carroll College in Helena.

Wyatt Sandford felt banged up after his first week of college football practice.

He thought the pain that started in his right foot might have come from a rolled ankle during one of his initial practices playing for Carroll College.

At first, his foot just appeared to be swollen to him. He then noticed the supposed swelling started progressing up his leg. Soon after, he observed his foot was in fact getting much worse.

"The top of my foot was like all black," the fifth-year senior said ahead of Montana's game against Montana State at noon Saturday at Bobcat Stadium in Bozeman. "I was like, shoot, I should probably go check that out."

He went to urgent care in Helena not all that long after he began living on his own for the first time when he left his family in Coeur D'Alene, Idaho, to attend college. With the likelihood of needing to wait days to get an answer from urgent care, he took the advice to visit an emergency room.

He got the sense after being examined upon arrival at the ER that the doctors knew what was wrong right away. Still, he had to wait to get an answer as they performed MRI and CAT scans for confirmation.

"I was there for like two hours before they told me what it was," he said. "I was just hooked up to all these machines and my parents were like four hours away. I was just starting to cry. I had no idea what was going on."

The diagnosis was he had been infected with necrotizing fasciitis, aka flesh-eating disease. The suspicion — although he'll never know for certain — was a little cut on one of his toes had provided an opening for the bacteria to enter his body before crawling up his leg.

The life-threatening infection could have led to amputation or even death. He underwent immediate surgery that night before he left the ER. He had another surgery the next day. A couple days later, he needed a third surgery.

The surgical debridement cut out the infected tissue and muscle so his body could regrow in a clean environment. About a month after the surgeries, he was back for a skin graft and received an opinion about his future playing football possibly being over.

"I never really thought that, but I did have a doctor who was like, you probably won't be able to play again, just with all the surgeries and then the skin graft," he said. "I was able to prove him wrong."

Sandford, who still has a visible scar on his right leg, carried that motivation as he first relearned to walk. Then he learned to run again. His determination was picking up steam.

He was able to trust his ankle and foot more by the time spring camp rolled around about six months later. The cold, hard, grass surface in springtime Helena did give him some pause when he initially got back on the field.

"Obviously, I was a little nervous at first, but once I got that confidence back, it was normal, it was good," he said.

After not playing that first season in college, he saw action in one game in 2023 as a sophomore. He had taken on a spot as a backup on the offensive line and at tight end while also having a role in jumbo packages, he said.

As a junior, he started at left guard in 2024. He excelled even more at right tackle in 2025, earning All-Frontier Conference first-team honors as a 6-foot-4, 298-pound anchor on one of Carroll's best offenses in recent seasons.

"I feel like I've just proven that I have the resilience to do it," he said. "When I put my mind to something, I'll figure it out and I'll get it done. It's just been super awesome getting to continue to play and prolong my football career because most people are done after high school."

Sandford's football career almost didn't progress too far past playing for Coeur d'Alene High School because of the issue with his foot that threatened to take away more than just his ability to play football.

Before that, his opportunities coming out of high school were limited because his recruiting was impacted by the pan-

Please see **SANDFORD,** Page 6



BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

Montana offensive lineman Torin Jeske (68) warms up during the college football game against Idaho State on Nov. 14 at Washington-Grizzly Stadium in Missoula. The Bozeman native is part of an offensive line that had to find five new starters this season.

JESKE MAKES RAPID RISE

Bozeman native helping stabilize OL as left tackle

CARSON CASHION
406 MT Sports

As the Grizzlies begin the Brawl-week festivities, there is perhaps nobody on Montana's roster more familiar with Bozeman than Torin Jeske.

A 6-foot-6, 295-pound offensive lineman for the Grizzlies, Jeske was born and raised in Bozeman before attending Bozeman High and played for the Hawks football team. He is the only Bozeman native on Montana's roster.

Jeske emerged as UM's starting left tackle this fall, his first year as a starter in Missoula, and has helped anchor an offensive line that has allowed for a stellar season of offense from the Grizzlies. The junior will be playing in his first Brawl of the Wild as a starter for Montana.

Jeske sat down with 406 MT Sports ahead of Montana's trip to Bozeman for the Brawl of the Wild, kicking off against Montana State at noon Saturday in Bobcat Stadium. This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.

Please see **JESKE,** Page 7

HOW WE SEE THE BIG SKY

BILL SPELTZ | 406 MT SPORTS

This is the best of times for the Brawl of the Wild football rivalry.

The saga goes all the way back to 1897, so making that claim requires plenty of ammunition to back it up.

Here's where I stand:

We all can agree the yearly showdown will forever be circled on the calendars of Treasure State sports fans. Even if UM and MSU were at the bottom of the Big Sky Conference standings right now, Saturday's clash would still mean everything to most Grizzly and Bobcat fans.

They're most definitely not at the bottom. The're playing for the league title once again.

Montana and Montana State have both been serious contenders for FCS bragging rights for a while and it has added a lot of spice to the recipe. The winner of Saturday's Brawl not only walks away with the cumbersome Great Divide Trophy but will win the Big Sky outright (if Cats prevail) or share (if Griz triumph) the Big Sky crown.

If the Cats pull it out, they'll probably get to host in the playoffs all the way through the semifinals. If the Grizzlies win, they'll probably get to host at least one playoff game and may even get a first-round playoff bye.

Hosting all the way through the playoffs meant everything for the Bobcats last season when they made a dream run and then pulled off an unlikely comeback in the FCS title game. It also meant a lot in 2024 when they won three home playoff games to reach the championship. And don't forget 2023 when the Grizzlies had three amazing home playoff wins that catapulted them into the championship in Frisco, Texas.

Just like last year's regular-season Brawl in Missoula, Saturday figures to be close. Mistakes will factor into the outcome.

Both teams are mighty dangerous offensively. The Cats have the best defense in the conference, at least statistically, but that group had trouble with missed tackles last week at Northern Colorado.

The one thing Montana State has that has meant the world in most of the recent Brawls is homefield advantage. Granted, the Cats did win a close one in Missoula last year. But generally speaking, homefield advantage helps and is probably going to pay off with a few false start penalties on the visitors.

Both teams are capable of putting together a winning performance this weekend and that's the beauty of it.



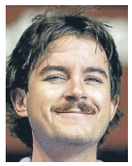
FRANK GOGOLA

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BILL SPELTZ

68-20



CARSON CASHION

65-23



VICTOR FLORES

63-25



SHAWN RAECKE PHOTO

Montana State quarterback Justin Lamson (8) tries to avoid Montana linebacker Peyton Wing during the 124th Brawl of the Wild last November at Washington-Grizzly Stadium. The Bobcats, who beat the Grizzlies twice last season, will host Montana Saturday at noon.

Who will emerge as the hero? We shall soon find out.

No. 8 Montana (6-2, 8-3) at No. 2 Montana State (7-1, 10-1), noon TV: Scripps Sports/ESPN+. The Bobcats stretched their league-high win streak to five games with a 31-21 victory at Northern Colorado last week. But the defending national champions have looked vulnerable at times in November. With a sputtering offense and shaky pass defense, the Cats could have easily lost at Idaho State two weeks ago. Then last Saturday, they couldn't seem to stop Northern Colorado's rushing attack early, eventually using more four-man fronts and shutting it down. One thing I noticed last Saturday is that Montana State's coaching staff appeared tense when talking with players on the sideline. There's immense pressure and it affects all the athletes and coaches in Division I football. The Bobcats will feel the pressure to perform as the favorite against the Grizzlies. But they're used to it and have risen to the occasion time after time the past few seasons. The difference this time may be the reliability and scrambling ability of MSU quarterback Justin Lamson. He comes up big in big games. Both teams will ride a roller coaster of highs and lows Saturday and MSU has had the more dependable offense and defense. It's going to be close and could go either way. Montana needs to put together a near-flawless performance and Eli Gillman needs to step up in a big way if the Griz are to stun the home team. **Bill Speltz:** Cats 31, Griz 30. **Frank Gogola:** Montana 41, Montana State 38 (OT). **Carson Cashion:** Montana State 45, Montana 38. **Victor Flores:** Cats 41, Griz 30.

Idaho (5-3, 5-6) at No. 25 Idaho State (3-5, 6-5), 4 p.m. TV: ESPN+. The Bengals were good enough to put a scare into Montana and Montana State but, sadly, they're not good enough to reach the playoffs. Considering the Vandals lost at home last week and the Bengals are hopping mad coming off close losses to Treasure State teams, I'm predicting ISU will win big in its season finale. The Bengals have the better defense and Idaho is 2-3 on the road. **Speltz:** Bengals 38, Vandals 31. **Gogola:** Idaho State 31, Idaho 24. **Cashion:** Idaho State 38, Idaho 35. **Flores:** ISU 31, Idaho 28.

Northern Colorado (2-6, 3-8) at No. 12 Northern Arizona (6-2, 8-3), 2 p.m. TV: ESPN+. The Jacks had a four-game win streak snapped last week by Weber State. Now they have their backs against the wall in their bid for a playoff berth. Northern Colorado is no slouch. The Bears are stout up front and the Jacks are going to have to earn it Saturday. It's worth noting that Northern Colorado is 0-5 on the road. **Speltz:** Jacks 41, Bears 21. **Gogola:** Northern Arizona 30, Northern Colorado 23. **Cashion:** Northern Arizona 31, Northern Colorado 14. **Flores:** NAU 35, UNC 17.

Cal Poly (3-5, 4-7) at No. 23 UC Davis (5-3, 7-4), 2 p.m. TV: ESPN+. The Aggies had a nice win at Idaho last week, 28-24. They're clinging to slim playoff hopes and a win over the Mustangs would certainly help. Davis is 3-1 at home this season. Cal Poly has lost four games in a row and is 2-3 on the road. It's a rivalry game so it could be close, but Davis has so much more to play for on the final week of the regular season. **Speltz:** Aggies 35, Mustangs 21. **Gogola:** UC Davis 37, Cal Poly 27. **Cashion:** UC Davis 28, Cal Poly 10. **Flores:** Davis 38, Poly 24.

Portland State (2-6, 2-9) at Eastern Washington (2-6, 3-8), 2 p.m. TV: ESPN+. The Eagles nearly blew a 17-point lead at Utah Tech last Saturday but did show moxie late in the game, erasing a deficit in the final minute. This week they're up against a Vikings team that has lost five in a row and is 1-5 on the road. Portland State did put up a good fight at home against Southern Utah last week but may be lacking the same motivation this week. **Speltz:** Eags 45, Viks 34. **Gogola:** Eastern Washington 35, Portland State 28. **Cashion:** Portland State 28, Eastern Washington 20. **Flores:** EWU 42, PSU 27.

Utah Tech (1-7, 1-10) at No. 15 Weber State (6-2, 7-4), 1 p.m. TV: ESPN+. The Trailblazers appeared destined for their first home win last Saturday against Eastern Washington, leading 28-24 with 15 seconds left. But alas, it wasn't meant to be. Now they're up against a Wildcats team with playoff aspirations. This one could get ugly. **Speltz:** Wildcats 48, Trailblazers 14. **Gogola:** Weber State 42, Utah Tech 21. **Cashion:** Weber State 42, Utah Tech 13. **Flores:** Weber 31, Tech 17.

Chicago State (3-7) at Southern Utah (5-6), noon. TV: ESPN+. What a weird nonconference matchup to finish the regular season. Let's call it the Consolation Bowl. At any rate, it's a great opportunity for the Thunderbirds to finish up on a three-game win streak. Then watch out for that team next season because it will challenge for league supremacy. **Speltz:** Thunderbirds 28, Cougars 14. **Gogola:** Southern Utah 45, Chicago State 17. **Cashion:** Southern Utah 49, Chicago State 10. **Flores:** SUU 28, Chicago State 14.

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
0	Monte Gillman	Jr.	RB	5-8	167	Dassel, Minn.
0	Gabe Stroud	Jr.	CB	5-11	185	Tyler, Texas
2	Hunter Haines	Jr.	S	6-2	212	West Linn, Ore.
2	Landon Ransom-Goelz	Sr.	WR	6-1	188	Trophy Club, Texas
3	Brooks Davis	Jr.	WR	6-0	180	Brentwood, Calif.
3	Jeilani Davis	Jr.	CB	6-0	201	Inglewood, Calif.
4	Luke Flowers	Jr.	QB	6-1	191	Rigby, Idaho
4	Dane Parker	Jr.	S	6-1	180	Puyallup, Wash.
5	Ian Finch	5th	WR	6-3	210	Missoula, Mont.
5	Hudson Schrader	Fr.	S	6-2	194	Los Gatos, Calif.
6	Chris Johnson II	Jr.	CB	6-1	190	Fort Worth, Texas
6	Legend Lyons	So.	WR	6-2	185	Covina, Calif.
7	Weston Adams	5th	WR	5-11	192	Shell, Wyo.
7	Kash Goicoechea	Jr.	S	6-1	199	Kalispell, Mont.
8	Keali'i Ah Yat	Sr.	QB	6-1	210	Kaneohe, Hawaii
8	Adama Fall	Gr.	S	6-3	210	Dakar, Senegal
9	Jordan Dever	Sr.	WR	6-0	175	Spokane, Wash.
9	Kougar Kappel	Fr.	S	6-0	178	Red Lodge, Mont.
10	Eli Gillman	5th	RB	6-0	215	Dassel, Minn.
10	Styles Goodman	So.	LB	6-2	230	Austin, Texas
11	Cameron Gurnsey	Sr.	WR	6-1	195	Butte, Mont.
11	Jayden Nicholas	Fr.	CB	6-0	168	Concord, Calif.
12	Elijah Brady	Sr.	CB	6-1	176	Seattle, Wash.
12	Gage Sliter	Sr.	QB	6-1	199	Kalispell, Mont.
13	Brock Beaner	So.	S	6-0	202	Anacortes, Wash.
13	Lekeldrick Bridges	Jr.	WR	5-11	175	Cedar Hill, Texas
14	DeAnte Gentry	So.	CB	5-11	170	Fort Worth, Texas
14	Korbin Hendrix	Sr.	WR	6-3	190	McKinney, Texas
16	Brady Jay	Fr.	QB	6-1	177	Moses Lake, Wash.
16	Braeden Orlandi	Sr.	S	6-1	200	Valley Springs, Calif.
17	Kade Boyd	Sr.	S	6-0	198	Billings, Mont.
17	Bridger Smith	So.	WR	6-1	178	Kalispell, Mont.
18	Devin Dunn	5th	DB	5-10	190	Chandler, Ariz.
18	Cody Schweikert	Jr.	QB	6-3	217	Columbia Falls, Mont.
19	Drew Price	So.	QB	5-10	179	Jacksonville, Fla.
19	Rodney Weatherspoon	Fr.	CB	6-0	170	Forth Worth, Texas
20	Sage Salopek	So.	CB	6-0	171	Seattle, Wash.
21	Ashton Paine	Sr.	DB	6-1	193	Tumwater, Wash.
21	Courtney Rogers	Fr.	RB	6-2	211	Blytheville, Ark.
23	Dane Kellner	Fr.	S	5-11	170	Honolulu, Hawaii
23	Dylan Paine	Gr.	RB	5-9	198	Tumwater, Wash.
24	Justin Eklund	5th	LB	6-2	235	Rocklin, Calif.
25	Brady Beaner	So.	S	6-0	191	Anacortes, Wash.
26	Chase Cook	So.	RB	5-11	197	Red Lodge, Mont.
27	Nohi Casco	Fr.	CB	5-11	195	Lahaina, Hawaii
28	Hashim Jones	So.	RB	6-0	200	Hartford, Conn.
29	Tanner Huff	Gr.	S	6-0	208	Butte, Mont.
30	Kade Cutler	5th	S	6-0	207	Phillipsburg, Mont.
31	Tanner Williams	Jr.	LB	6-1	218	Orange, Calif.
32	Peyton Wing	5th	LB	6-0	225	Sumner, Wash.
33	Taylor Jones	So.	LB	6-1	210	Missoula, Mont.
34	Parker Link	Fr.	S	5-10	191	Missoula, Mont.
35	Cooper Neer	Fr.	LB	6-3	202	Kennewick, Wash.
36	Garrett Speer	Jr.	DB	6-0	195	Sherwood, Ore.
37	Clay Oven	Sr.	LB	6-2	225	Billings, Mont.
38	Nai Mose	5th	LB	6-0	225	Euless, Texas
39	Fynn Ridgeway	Sr.	RB	6-1	208	Whitefish, Mont.
40	Colton Lentz	So.	LB	6-3	223	Nooksack, Wash.
41	Ryder Barinowski	Jr.	K	6-0	203	Whitefish, Mont.
42	Giovanni Pifferini	Sr.	DL	6-4	230	Placerville, Calif.
43	Cooper Cyphers	Fr.	DL	6-2	253	Fort Worth, Texas
44	Titus Rohrer	5th	TE	6-7	235	Bryan, Ohio
45	Wyatt Redding	5th	KP	6-1	212	Sumner, Wash.
46	Jo Silver	5th	KP	6-0	221	Fremont, Ohio
47	Jace Eastlick	Jr.	LS	6-3	222	Coeur d'Alene, Idaho
48	Isaac Keim	Jr.	DL	6-4	280	Kalispell, Mont.
49	Elijah Rincon	Fr.	DE	6-3	226	Hacienda Heights, Calif.
50	Sam Merriman	So.	LB	6-0	230	Seattle, Wash.
51	Spencer Tripp	So.	DL	5-11	268	Missoula, Mont.
53	Mac Olsen	Fr.	DL	6-4	253	Manti, Utah
54	Evan Pyron	Fr.	DE	6-3	244	Missoula, Mont.
55	Austin Buehler	Sr.	OL	6-5	295	Helena, Mont.
55	Zaiden Wallace	Jr.	DL	6-4	300	Ewa Beach, Hawaii
57	Jake Mason	Sr.	DL	6-2	265	Ferndale, Wash.
58	Solomon Tuliaupupu	Gr.	LB	6-3	260	Pomona, Calif.
59	Nui Tovey	So.	DE	6-3	250	Lake Oswego, Ore.
60	Wyatt Sandford	5th	OL	6-4	298	Coeur d'Alene, Idaho
61	Lincoln Hoefer	So.	OL	6-6	306	Everson, Wash.
62	Lincoln Senter	Fr.	OL	6-5	240	Great Falls, Mont.
63	Kaikoa Kanakaole	So.	OL	6-5	295	Kapa'a, Hawaii
64	Matt Hilden	Jr.	OL	6-6	304	Santa Rosa, Calif.
65	Dylan Jemtegaard	Gr.	OL	6-4	296	Yelm, Wash.
66	Ezra Meyer	So.	OL	6-5	292	Missoula, Mont.
68	Torin Jeske	Jr.	OL	6-6	295	Bozeman, Mont.
69	Trevor Steinbach	Jr.	OL	6-5	300	Sammamish, Wash.
70	Josiah West	Fr.	OL	6-6	317	Prosser, Wash.
71	Quinlan Hyatt	So.	OL	6-7	295	Spokane, Wash.
72	Jack D'Ambra	Gr.	OL	6-3	303	Wildomar, Calif.
74	Owen Liechti	Fr.	OL	6-7	250	Ankeny, Iowa
75	Dyllan Drummond	Jr.	OL	6-4	315	Tyler, Texas
76	Campbell Vandiver	Sr.	OT	6-8	285	Nashville, Tenn.
77	Carter Bowen	Sr.	OL	6-7	305	Dawson, Minn.
78	Lucas Freitas	Sr.	OL	6-6	310	Snoqualmie, Wash.
80	Malaki Davis	Fr.	TE	6-5	230	Tacoma, Wash.
81	Mariano Birdno	Jr.	TE	6-5	255	Flagstaff, Ariz.
82	Merek Fisher	Fr.	TE	6-6	238	Billings, Mont.
83	Dawson Hammond	Fr.	WR	6-0	176	Malta, Mont.
84	Grady Walker	Jr.	TE	6-4	235	Missoula, Mont.
85	Wesley Ehret	Fr.	WR	6-2	190	Belgrade, Mont.
86	William Snell	Fr.	WR	6-4	189	Billings, Mont.
87	Everett O'Donnell	Jr.	P	6-2	199	Melbourne, Aus.
88	Reese Brooks	So.	TE	6-4	230	Round Rock, Texas
89	Danny Sirmon	Jr.	TE	6-6	265	Missoula, Mont.
90	Tyler King	Sr.	DL	6-5	252	Happy Valley, Ore.
91	Cooper Buffington	So.	DL	6-4	275	Winfield, Iowa
92	Zekiel Seumalo	Sr.	DL	6-0	265	Kent, Wash.
94	Cole Harpole	So.	DL	6-3	240	Gunter, Texas
95	Manase Tupou	Jr.	DL	6-1	315	Kihei, Hawaii
96	Logan Knaevelsrud	So.	DL	6-4	252	Snoqualmie, Wash.
97	Hayden Schwartz	5th	DL	6-4	245	Jacksonville, Fla.
98	Derek Opitz	Fr.	DT	6-3	244	Helena, Mont.
99	Braydon Bailey	5th	DT	6-2	302	Kona, Hawaii

MONTANA STATE BOBCATS

No.	Name	Year	Pos	Ht	Wt	Hometown
0	Takhari Carr	5th	DB	5-10	182	Compton, Calif.
1	Maxwell Hendrick	So.	WR	5-11	196	Tomball, Texas
1	Alec Wills	5th	DB	5-11	175	Carson, Calif.
2	Taki Uluilakepa	Sr.	DB	6-0	181	Provo, Utah
3	Kory Boyd	Jr.	DB	6-0	185	Dallas, Texas
3	Jared White	5th	RB	5-10	209	Frisco, Texas
4	Tim Thomas II	So.	DB	5-11	202	Houston, Texas
5	JJ Dolan	Sr.	DB	6-0	186	Missoula, Mont.
5	Jake Hamilton	Sr.	QB	6-2	200	Colfax, Calif.
6	Parker Mady	So.	WR	5-10	186	University Place, Wash.
6	Bryant Meredith	5th	DB	5-10	171	Concord, Calif.
7	Tayden Gray	Sr.	DB	6-0	187	Arlington, Texas
7	KJ Johnson	Fr.	RB	5-10	180	Houston, Texas
8	Deshawn Krein	Fr.	DB	6-0	190	Phoenix, Ariz.
8	Justin Lamson	5th	QB	6-2	222	El Dorado Hills, Calif.
9	Kaden Cole	Fr.	WR	6-1	180	Houston, Texas
9	Mason Dethman	Jr.	DB	6-4	205	Brockton, Mont.
10	Bryce Grebe	Sr.	LB	6-2	235	Melstone, Mont.
10	Jabez Woods	Jr.	WR	5-11	185	Spanaway, Wash.
11	Kash Embry	So.	WR	6-1	186	Bozeman, Mont.
11	Kayden Steptoe	Fr.	DB	6-0	200	College Station, Texas
12	Ryan Bowles	Jr.	DE	6-2	228	Woodinville, Wash.
12	Jordan Reed	5th	WR	6-6	228	El Centro, Calif.
13	Carter Dahlke	Fr.	WR	5-9	175	Bozeman, Mont.
14	Jasiah Denmark	Fr.	DB	6-0	170	Puyallup, Wash.
14	Taco Dowler	5th	WR	5-9	171	Billings, Mont.
15	Patrick Duchien	Sr.	QB	6-2	215	Florence, Mont.
15	Gianni Edwards	So.	DB	5-11	160	Dallas, Texas
16	Brendon Ross	Jr.	DB	5-10	175	Rockwall, Texas
16	Greyson Stevens	Fr.	WR	5-11	175	Yakima, Wash.
17	Evan Hughen	Fr.	DB	6-2	175	Bozeman, Mont.
17	Grant Vigen	So.	QB	6-6	229	Bozeman, Mont.
18	Brian Harris	Fr.	DB	5-10	180	La Marque, Texas
18	Joseph Janney	Fr.	QB	6-0	190	Klamath Falls, Ore.
19	Tom Carter	Sr.	WR	6-0	176	Helena, Mont.
19	Neil Daily	5th	LB	6-3	232	Billings, Mont.
20	Brit Linder	Fr.	LB	6-3	220	Helena, Mont.
22	Marcus Coleman II	So.	CB	5-11	161	Spring, Texas
22	Shanko Kornachuk	So.	RB	5-11	180	Lake Oswego, Ore.
23	Elias Bonner	Fr.	DB	5-11	180	Billings, Mont.
23	Adam Jones	Sr.	RB	6-1	202	Missoula, Mont.
24	Colter Petre	Sr.	DB	6-1	205	Helena, Mont.
24	Nick Seymour	So.	WR	5-11	180	Valencia, Calif.
25	Cale Breslin	So.	RB	5-11	209	Las Vegas, Nev.
25	Luke Oxarart	So.	DB	5-11	196	Montana City, Mont.
26	Malachi Claunch	So.	RB	6-1	204	Billings, Mont.
27	Brock Steel	5th	LB	6-2	220	Sheridan, Wyo.
28	Colson Coon	Sr.	RB	5-9	195	Sheridan, Wyo.
30	Colby Frokjer	So.	P	6-3	201	West Haven, Utah
31	Vinnie Souza	So.	LB	6-2	215	Billings, Mont.
32	Charlie Berkley	So.	DB	6-3	199	San Diego, Calif.
33	Ebe Grabow	Fr.	DB	6-2	200	Big Sky, Mont.
34	Cole Taylor	Sr.	LB	6-3	230	Great Falls, Mont.
35	Breck Reed	Fr.	WR	6-0	175	Sheridan, Wyo.
36	Zac Crews	5th	DE	6-4	240	Missoula, Mont.
37	Josh Woodberry	Jr.	LB	5-11	217	Bozeman, Mont.
38	Michael Rubich	So.	K	6-0	188	Rock Springs, Wyo.
39	Myles Sansted	5th	K	6-3	195	Alexandria, Minn.
40	Brody Johnson	So.	LS	6-1	218	Peoria, Ariz.
41	Caden Dowler	5th	DB	6-0	205	Billings, Mont.
42	Ryan Krahe	5th	LB	6-2	230	Great Falls, Mont.
43	Xavier Ahrens	So.	LB	6-2	233	Tacoma, Wash.
44	Jake Vigen	5th	DE	6-2	240	Bozeman, Mont.
45	Tommy Springman	So.	TE	6-0	225	Bozeman, Mont.
46	Logan Fredericksen	5th	DE	6-4	236	Rigby, Idaho
47	George Helms	Jr.	RB	5-11	199	Big Sky, Mont.
48	Blaine Downing	So.	DE	6-3	215	Saco, Mont.
49	Zac Waible	5th	LB	6-2	215	Lake Oswego, Ore.
50	Zack Black	5th	DT	6-4	285	Meridian, Idaho
51	Dalton Noble	Jr.	OL	6-4	290	Clancy, Mont.
53	Nicholas Maloff	So.	OL	6-2	297	Meridian, Idaho
54	Zac Nyland	Sr.	C/OG	6-4	296	Meridian, Idaho
55	AJ Tanupo	Jr.	DT	6-2	291	Tacoma, Wash.
56	Samora Ezekiel	5th	OL	6-2	292	Fort Worth, Texas
57	Everett Carr	Sr.	OL	6-4	305	Bozeman, Mont.
58	Dominic Solano	Sr.	DE	6-4	250	Glendale, Ariz.
60	Tommy Nilson	5th	OL	6-3	296	Missoula, Mont.
61	Aiden Kaplan	Jr.	OL	6-3	290	Montgomery, Texas
62	Tommy Lewis	Fr.	OL	6-3	290	Havre, Mont.
63	Dylan Rollins	Sr.	OL	6-6	291	Missoula, Mont.
64	Burke Mastel	5th	OL	6-5	310	Red Lodge, Mont.
66	Titan Fleischmann	5th	OT	6-4	295	Pocatello, Idaho
68	Nate Thornton	So.	OL	6-5	285	Poulsbo, Wash.
69	Jaren Perkins	5th	DT	6-1	275	Bozeman, Mont.
71	Matthew Perusse	Fr.	OL	6-4	275	Maple Grove, Minn.
72	Braden Zimmer	Jr.	OL	6-6	290	Billings, Mont.
73	Gavin Wilkins	Fr.	OL	6-3	265	Anaheim, Calif.
75	Ben Winters	So.	OL	6-3	295	Kalispell, Mont.
76	Brody Bulette	Fr.	OL	6-6	296	Polson, Mont.
80	Luvens Valcin	Jr.	TE	6-1	230	Auburn, Wash.
81	Carter Cocke	So.	TE	6-3	233	Sumner, Wash.
82	Luke Smith	Sr.	TE	6-5	232	Bozeman, Mont.
83	Bobby Gutzman	Fr.	WR	6-2	180	Bozeman, Mont.
84	Dane Steel	Jr.	WR	5-10	185	Sheridan, Wyo.
85	Carter Curnow	So.	TE	6-4	245	Dillon, Mont.
87	Kade Robinson	Fr.	TE	6-6	220	Missoula, Mont.
88	Rylan Schlepp	5th	TE	6-4	245	Bozeman, Mont.
89	Rocky Lencioni	Jr.	TE	6-4	247	Bozeman, Mont.
90	Hunter Sharbono	Sr.	DT	6-2	281	Fairview, Mont.
91	Seth Brock	Jr.	DE	6-3	235	Eagle, Idaho
92	Graysen Schneider	So.	DT	6-3	276	Stewartville, Mont.
93	Jace Bantz	Fr.	DE	6-5	210	Grass Range, Mont.
94	Josaiah Asuega	So.	DT	6-4	310	Port Orchard, Wash.
95	Adam Guajardo	Fr.	DE	6-3	197	Missoula, Mont.
96	John Hurst-Daniels	Fr.	DT	6-4	240	Texas City, Texas
97	Gavin Walden	Fr.	DT	6-2	260	Eden Prairie, Minn.
98	Hudson Wiens	Jr.	DL	6-3	285	Bozeman, Mont.
99	Bruin Fleischmann	5th	TE	6-5	235	Pocatello, Idaho
99	Talon Marsh	Sr.	DL	6-1	280	Helena, Mont.

Sandford

From Page 2

demic. Although he was a two-star prospect and an all-state second-team O-lineman in Idaho, his only college offers came from NAIA teams and NCAA Division III schools.

At Carroll, he felt he was improving and was proving himself while going up against defensive lineman Hunter Peck, who was an NAIA All-American before he transferred to UM, where he earned All-Big Sky first-team honors in 2025. Sandford entered the portal and moved to D-I with the Grizzlies this year.

"When I got to Carroll, it was never something I thought about, moving up," he said. "It was more just the opportunity arose and then I was like, oh, I might as well go try and prove myself. Because in high school I always thought I could have gone D-I, but then I didn't get that opportunity, so to have it now has been huge."

Sandford joined an offensive line that was searching for many answers as it sought an entirely new starting five this season. He has been a backup O-lineman while being on extra point kicks and two-point plays in addition to playing with the second-stringers later in games during blowout wins.

While it has been a massive reduction in playing time from being a starter the past two seasons at Carroll, he has worked to stay ready should injuries thrust him into a starting role. The offensive line, and the offense as a whole, has avoided the rash of injuries that have plagued the defense this season.

His football smarts have allowed him to be capable of playing right tackle, left tackle and left guard. His versatility is the thing that veteran offensive line coach Brent Myers appreciates the most. Myers has seen him stay engaged while being a backup and has come to understand why.

"Because he loves football," he said. "And he's very intelligent. He's one of those guys that's very conscientious about everything he does. You know the old saying, how you do one thing is how you do everything. Well, he does everything right. Very proud of him."

Before Sandford ever returned to the field at Carroll, his thoughts hadn't first gone to football while he sat in the hospital room during the week when he went under the knife three times. His mind was more focused on school.

He had just gotten started in the college classroom rather recently at that time. He missed a bunch of school and couldn't attend classes for a couple months because he was undergoing antibiotic infusions after surgery.

"I was just stressed out," he said. "It was my first introduction to college and then I was already missing all these classes. I just felt kind of behind."

He excelled in the classroom following his return to the field, where he gets to act out the physicality that he has loved since he began playing tackle football in third grade. He was a three-time academic all-conference honoree, a three-time NAIA scholar-athlete and one-time academic All-American.

He is working on finishing his bachelor's degree in elementary education at UM this school year while enjoying getting to spend more time with his girlfriend, who is on the volleyball team. Student teaching will be coming in the future.

He first got interested in exploring a career in education because his mother, Toby Sandford, is a math teacher in Coeur d'Alene.

"Also, when I first got to school, I was like, I feel like that'd be kind of fun to learn about," he said. "And then also, I just feel like you can have an impact on so many people being a teacher. I feel like it's kind of like coaching. You get to impact a lot of young lifes."

Sandford's degree will be in K-8 education. He would like to teach in the upper middle school ages, preferably fourth through eighth grade.

He'd also like to stay around football, so there could be some coaching in his future. But that's too far out to say. He's taking things one step at a time.

Whether it's in the classroom or on the gridiron in the future, he'll have a story about his return to the field that he can use to illustrate a point whenever one of his pupils needs a lesson in hard work and perseverance.

"Playing football is something I've done my whole life, so obviously it coming to an end kind of soon is a weird thought," he said. "But, yeah, it means the world to be able to keep playing. And then to be able to move up here and experience everything here has been super awesome."

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BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

Montana offensive lineman Wyatt Sandford (60) lines up during the college football game against Idaho State on Nov. 14 at Washington-Grizzly Stadium in Missoula. Sandford spent the previous four seasons at NAIA Carroll College in Helena, where he earned All-Frontier Conference first-team honors in 2025.

Jeske

From Page 3

Q: What's your best story from (first-year offensive line coach) Brent Meyers?

A: That's a hard one. I would say just the laughs we have in film. I've had a couple really serious O-line coaches in my career, and he can sit down and kind of be one of us, even though — don't tell him I said this — he's a little older. But just that he can sit down and be one of us and be one of the guys, he's been awesome.

Q: How much fun is blocking for Eli Gillman?

A: It's unreal. I look good because of him. You know, he helps our O-line out so much, it's unreal. He deserves all the flowers, and he's been unreal to block for. It's hard to even put into words what it's like messing up a block and seeing him take it for 84 yards.

Q: Do you have a favorite run of his this year?

A: The Monte block one. I think that was my favorite one because I kind of messed up my block. He bounced off my back and went all the way, and Monte put a huge block on that guy. It was just awesome to see those brothers get that moment.

Q: Take me through your recruitment process out of Bozeman, how early was Montana talking to you?

A: So I was pretty undersized, especially my junior year. I mean, I was about 180 pounds my junior year, so I didn't get a lot of attention from really anyone, even NAIA. And then my senior year, I put some weight on. I was about 230, 240, and NAIA's started reaching out, and the Griz reached out. I came on a game day and kind of didn't hear from them after that. I decided to commit to Montana Tech. I was committed there for about three months, and then after spring ball here, one of the O-linemen decided to hang it up and (UM director of recruiting) Keaton (Johnson) texted me, and he was like, 'Hey, we'll offer you a preferred walk-on if you want to come play for us.' I pretty much just hopped on it immediately, I knew I wanted to play here.

Q: Did you grow up a Grizzly fan?

A: I wasn't really a big fan of any of the college teams until I got into middle school, and my brother decided he wanted to be a Griz fan, so I kind of rolled with it.

Q: Throughout that whole process, did you ever hear from Montana State?

A: Yeah, I got a little attention from them.

Q: What have been the biggest points of growth for you since you arrived in Missoula?



Montana offensive lineman Torin Jeske (68) warms up during the college football game against Idaho State on Nov. 14 at Washington-Grizzly Stadium in Missoula. The Bozeman native is on an offensive line that has used the same five starters in every game this season.

BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

A: Strength and weight, since I was pretty undersized coming in. I was probably 60 pounds too light, so obviously gaining weight, gaining strength. Gaining agility, too, learning to use my body. I was just a big kid and didn't really know how to use my body at that time and use my length, and I think that's the biggest improvement I've made. It's just being able to use my body in the right situations.

Q: I was asking Austin (Buehler) this the other week, what are your go-to meals for putting on weight?

A: I was a big fan of Breakfast Club. Breakfast Club was my weight gain. Breakfast Club, Cafe Rio. Those were my two meals that just like helped me put on as much weight as I could.

Q: What's your order at those spots?

A: I get a grilled steak with gravy and chipotle sour cream. That's my go-to order at Breakfast Club. And then Cafe Rio — this is like so fat-people stuff — I get a burrito, and instead of getting it enchilada style, I get it queso style. So it's just smothered in queso. It's just so many calories.

Q: You're about to start in your first Brawl of the Wild, how special is that as a Montana kid?

A: It's unreal. Like I said earlier, it's always been a dream of mine to play for Montana and getting to play in that game is going to be a surreal feeling. We'll be fired up for that. I'll be fired up for that, for sure.

Q: Did you go to any Brawls growing up?

A: I went to one brawl, I think, until I started playing here. It was a Griz win, that's all I can remember.

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



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