

THE EDGE

Missoulain reporter Nick Lockridge assesses the strengths of both teams

Offense

QB

Montana

N. Arizona

Northern Arizona's Cary Grossart is completing 68 percent of his passes (105 of 155), which is the best in the Big Sky Conference by a starting quarterback. Montana's quasi-starter Nate Montana is 13 of 23.

OL

Montana

N. Arizona

The Griz have allowed just five QB sacks in seven games this season. The Lumberjacks have given up 17 sacks for a loss of 164 yards. Yeeash.

RB

Montana

N. Arizona

No more Dan Moore. UM's bruising fullback is out with a leg injury. But not to worry, that just means more carries for last week's breakout back: redshirt frosh Jordan Canada.

WR/TE

Montana

N. Arizona

Sophomore Ify Umodu leads NAU in receptions, but he's had two games this year without a single catch. Sounds kind of iffy to me. And speaking of that, Griz fans are hoping Jabin Sambrano can shake off last week's ankle injury and his five-game TD drought.

Defense

DL

Montana

N. Arizona

Less than half a yard separates these two teams as the league's second-best run stopper (MSU is first). UM allows just 137.8 yards per game, while NAU gives up 138.3. Each unit should get a stiff test this week.

LB

Montana

N. Arizona

Why isn't Caleb McSurdy on the Buck Buchanan Award watch list? Of the seven linebackers already on the list, McSurdy has better numbers than two of them. I smell a write-in candidacy.

CB/Safety

Montana

N. Arizona

Grossart may be an efficient passer, but UM has the best pass efficiency defense in the Big Sky. Opponents are completing just 59 percent of their passes against the Griz, who also have a league-high 8 picks.

Special Teams

K/P>Returns

Montana

N. Arizona

The Jacks rank No. 2 in the FCS in kickoff returns, which they should be getting a lot of because UM place kicker Brody McKnight is on a tear right now with field goals.

Intangibles

Montana

N. Arizona

The boom-'n-bust of UM's gadget offense is starting to wear thin. Let's hope the Griz coaches took notice of Canada and his ability to carry the team to victory with a big second half last week. Grinding down NAU in that thin Skydome air would help re-inflate UM fans.