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GRIZZLY GAME DAY

Missoulian



WELL DUNN

Fighter's mentality powers
safety Devin Dunn

BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

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DUNN DEALING

Arizona transfer
breaking out after
4 years as walk-on

FRANK GOGOLA
406 MT Sports

Devin Dunn has a great appreciation for combat sports.

His favorite UFC fighter is Charles Oliveira, who overcame thoughts of quitting early in his mixed martial arts career to become the lightweight champion. Oliveira has made people tap out, give in and quit more than anyone else as he is currently the organization's all-time submissions leader.

Saying he's had enough and crying uncle isn't in Dunn's vocabulary. His fortitude powered him forward through injury and lack of playing time as a walk-on for his first four college football seasons with the Arizona Wildcats.

He finally earned his first scholarship when he transferred to Montana this past offseason for his final year of eligibility. He then got his first career start on Oct. 3 and has set multiple career highs as he has shown a fighter's mentality that would suit him well on the gridiron or in the UFC's octagon.

"I really like the pure competition in its rawest form," he said. "It's just you against another man. That's really how I try to think about life. Just competition, be the best you can. In UFC, it's man vs. man, but it's really man vs. yourself."

"You got to do what you got to do to improve every single day. In life, there's going to be times where you're like, 'Oh, I can't do it,' but you got to fight back. That's why I like that because the pressure and the will it takes to get yourself locked in the cage one on one."

Dunn spent time around a different cage — a batting cage — as a youngster growing up. His grandfather on his mother's side, Dwayne Murphy, had stints as the Toronto Blue Jays hitting coach, first base coach and outfield coach.

Dunn was in awe being in the clubhouse around sluggers Jose Bautista and Edwin Encarnacion when he visited his grandfa-



BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

Montana defensive back Devin Dunn reaches for the tackle on Idaho tight end Hayden Kincheloe during the college football game on Oct. 17 at Washington-Grizzly Stadium in Missoula. Dunn spent the previous four seasons as a walk-on with FBS team Arizona in his home state.

ther, who is credited with helping transform Bautista into a home run hitter who mashed 54 in 2010.

Dunn also enjoyed learning about his grandfather's decorated playing career. Murphy spent 12 seasons with the Oakland

A's, won six consecutive gold gloves and batted behind first-ballot Hall of Famer Rickey Henderson.

Being around high-level athletics helped Dunn fall in love with sports early.

"Just the competition, it was fun," he

said. "The simplest thing is it's fun to be with your peers trying to win. Winning is fun. That's really what appealed to me. I find a lot of joy in winning."

Please see **DUNN**, Page 6



BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

Montana defensive lineman Zekiel Seumalo (92) calls signs to the rest of the defensive line during the college football game against Idaho on Oct. 17 at Washington-Grizzly Stadium in Missoula. Seumalo is a senior who is in his second season with the Grizzlies.

Seumalo strives to uphold high standard

Defensive lineman earns starting role as injuries mount

CARSON CASHION
406 MT Sports

Montana senior defensive lineman Zekiel Seumalo has seen his workload increase over the past month and a half.

The JUCO product (Allan Hancock College) became a starter after fellow senior Jake Mason went down with a leg injury against Utah Tech in the third game. Since then, he has totaled three tackles for loss, including one sack, and has generated two quarterback hurries. On the season, he's sitting at nine solo tackles and 20 total tackles.

As injuries have mounted for the Montana defense, Seumalo's impact since rising to a starting role has been a positive one.

Seumalo sat down with 406 MT Sports

ahead of Montana's home matchup against Eastern Washington at 2 p.m. MT Saturday in Cheney, Washington. This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.

Q: How has this season been going for you so far?

A: Pretty good, just kind of grinding my way up to the top. I definitely didn't have a great production year last year, so this year, with the new staff, I was trying to see how I could fit into this defense and just learn as much as I can so I could be one of the leaders of this group.

Q: How would you compare this year's defense with last season?

A: I don't think you can really compare it defensively because the schemes are different. Every year, you're gonna meet different boys. You're gonna build different relationships with everybody. I love this group. I feel like we're a tight-knit group, always goofing around and stuff like that. But when things that are serious need to be within the right mood, we definitely settle down.

Please see **SEUMALO**, Page 7

HOW WE SEE THE BIG SKY

BILL SPELTZ | 406 MT SPORTS

Never underestimate the power of Eastern Washington's motivation when it comes to its perceived rivalry with the Montana football team.

It's safe to say the feeling isn't mutual for the Grizzlies. They will forever look upon the Montana State Bobcats as their archrival.

But knowing the Eagles feel so strongly about beating UM, coupled with the fact they historically play well on the red turf at home, should make for interesting viewing Saturday. Eastern has one of the most dangerous and effective quarterbacks in the Big Sky Conference in Nate Bell and we all know about Montana's issues defending the pass.

Even back in 2014 when the Eagles were the class of the Big Sky, with future CFL star Vernon Adams Jr. at quarterback and future NFL All-Pro Cooper Kupp at receiver, they always gave the Grizzlies their undivided attention. Consider, if you will, a quote from Eastern defensive tackle Dylan Zylstra that year.

"I don't know how the Griz feel about it, but I know this is the game we look forward to a lot of the year," he said. "... It means something more for us."

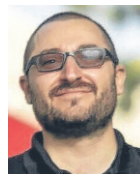
Montana needs to be mindful not to look past EWU. Don't forget 2024 when the Grizzlies took a 3-1 record to Eastern and escaped with a 52-49 win over an Eagles team that was 1-3. Or last year when Montana took a No. 2 ranking into its home game with Eastern Washington and escaped with a 29-24 win.

Eastern will be well-rested for the Grizzlies coming off a bye week. Likewise, the Grizzlies will be well-rested and motivated coming off a home loss to Idaho and a bye week.

The Eags have had two weeks to tweak things after laying an egg defensively in a 56-20 home loss to third-ranked Montana State. That game was all about the Cats' rushing attack, which accounted for 242 yards and six touchdowns.

If the Grizzlies can gain some traction defensively, the game should be a cakewalk. But Eastern has averaged close to 30 points per game the past three weeks, so there's a decent chance Saturday will turn into another one of those shootout games for the Griz. You know, the kind that can go either way.

Even if it is a shootout, Montana should be fine if it delivers its usual offensive performance. Then after facing off against a sagging Eagles squad, the Griz will stay home for games against Portland State and Idaho State, both of which have stumbled in October. It's a pretty favorable schedule heading into the Brawl of the Wild on Nov. 21 in Bozeman.



FRANK
GOGOLA

53-17



BILL
SPELTZ

53-17



CARSON
CASHION

50-20



VICTOR
FLORES

47-23



BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

Montana wide receiver Brooks Davis (3) catches the ball in the end zone against Idaho defensive back Luca Moore (27) during the college football game on Oct. 17 at Washington-Grizzly Stadium in Missoula.

No. 14 Montana (3-2, 5-3) at Eastern Washington (1-4, 2-6), 2 p.m. TV: Scripps Sports/ESPN+. You know Griz standout running back Eli Gillman is bound to have a big day against the Eags' vulnerable run defense. The question is whether or not Eastern's capable offense can keep pace with Montana's high-powered attack. Montana's Keali'i Ah Yat and Bell rank first and second, respectively, in Big Sky passing. However, there is disparity there because Ah Yat has thrown only two interceptions in league play and Bell has thrown eight. Plus Ah Yat has 22 touchdown passes to 16 for Bell. When it comes to running the football, Eastern has no one that remotely compares to Gillman. He averages 127 yards per game with a pace-setting 13 rushing touchdowns in league play while the Eagles' top rusher is Bell, who averages 46.4 rushing yards per game with seven touchdowns. Key to this game will be how fast Montana starts the game. If it can build a lead and take Eastern's crowd out of the equation, the afternoon will be much easier. If not, it could be a serious test of will for the maroon and silver. **Bill Speltz:** Grizzlies 41, Eagles 34. **Frank Gogola:** Montana 41, Eastern Washington 35. **Carson Cashion:** Montana 49, Eastern Washington 38. **Victor Flores:** Griz 45, Eagles 38.

Cal Poly (3-3, 4-5) at No. 3 Montana State (4-1, 7-1), 1 p.m. TV: Scripps Sports/ESPN+. The Mustangs were respectable prior to last Saturday. They won four of their first eight games and the ones they lost were close. Then came Oct. 24 and their inexplicable home loss to previously winless Utah Tech. The Trailblazers went on a 27-3 run from midway through the first period to midway through the third. Hard to imagine such a ghastly stretch. Some fans like to nitpick Montana State's narrow home win over No. 22 Weber State last week, but the Wildcats are for real. Plus they scored a special teams touchdown in Bozeman. Take away that kickoff return for a TD and it's a 38-26 game and there's far less nitpicking. Anyway, I stand by my contention the third-ranked Bobcats are the team to beat in the FCS and they'll win more comfortably this week. **Speltz:** Bobcats 49, Mustangs 21. **Gogola:** Montana State 42, Cal Poly 20. **Cashion:** Montana State

35, Cal Poly 10. **Flores:** Cats 44, Mustangs 17.

No. 7 Northern Arizona (4-1, 6-2) at Southern Utah (2-3, 3-5), 1 p.m. TV: ESPN+. This a dangerous game for the dome-dwelling Lumberjacks, who own the Big Sky's longest win streak at three. The Thunderbirds have shown they're not afraid of anyone, pushing Montana to the limit in Missoula and upstart Idaho to the limit last week in Moscow. Southern Utah is 2-1 at home, with victories over ranked teams UC Davis and Weber State. But I still like Northern Arizona to win this one since it has the better defense and the better quarterback in veteran Ty Pennington. **Speltz:** Jacks 34, Thunderbirds 31. **Gogola:** Northern Arizona 38, Southern Utah 31. **Cashion:** Northern Arizona 27, Southern Utah 20. **Flores:** NAU 31, SUU 24.

No. 23 Idaho State (2-3, 5-3) at Utah Tech (1-4, 1-7), 1 p.m. TV: ESPN+. What does it say that the Bengals are ranked despite losing three of their last four games? It says the FCS is not very deep and ISU is still getting major brownie points for a win over Utah State that it recorded way back in early September. Utah State is 2-5 but did have a 17-16 home win over Washington State. So as previously mentioned, the Bengals are still reaping major dividends for the win at Utah State. Idaho State should keep its national ranking this week in St. George, Utah. The forecast is calling for rain and 62 degrees, which actually plays to dome-dwelling ISU's advantage since it won't be terribly warm. The Trailblazers will fall back to Earth this week. **Speltz:** Bengals 31, Trailblazers 24. **Gogola:** Idaho State 34, Utah Tech 21. **Cashion:** Idaho State 42, Utah Tech 21. **Flores:** ISU 35, Utah Tech 17.

No. 20 UC Davis (3-2, 5-3) at No. 22 Weber State (4-2, 5-4), 1 p.m. TV: ESPN+. This is arguably the most intriguing game of the week. The team that emerges victorious still has a decent chance to win or tie for the Big Sky title. Amazing, really, when you consider the Aggies have suffered blowout losses to Montana and Southern Utah and the Wildcats lost at home to Portland State last month. Both teams have been up and down in recent weeks and it's hard to tell which version of each will show up this week. I'm going with the Wildcats because they're the home team and the forecast is calling for 57 degrees and rainy in Ogden, Utah. That forecast may not be to the liking of the warm-weather Aggies, who are 2-2 on the road. **Speltz:** Wildcats 30, Aggies 27. **Gogola:** Weber State 37, UC Davis 30. **Cashion:** UC Davis 28, Weber State 24. **Flores:** Weber 42, Davis 27.

Idaho (3-2, 3-5) at Portland State (2-3, 2-6), noon. TV: ESPN+. The Vandals have won three of their last four and the only loss came at Weber State, which has steadily gained respect this month and pushed Montana State in Bozeman last Saturday. The Vikings have lost two in a row and last week's 38-8 setback at Idaho State was a good indication they are having issues on the offensive side of the ball. **Speltz:** Vandals 38, Vikings 21. **Gogola:** Idaho 40, Portland State 27. **Cashion:** Idaho 31, Portland State 10. **Flores:** Idaho 41, PSU 24.

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No.	Name	Year	Pos	Ht	Wt	Hometown	27	Steven Lee Jr.	R-So.	DB	6-2	196	Lake Stevens, Wash.	66	Cole McGovern	Jr.	OL	6-5	287	Moorpark, Calif.
0	Mckel Broussard	Gr.	S	6-0	209	Los Angeles, Calif.	29	Jaxon Bell	Fr.	RB	5-9	173	Brentwood, Calif.	67	Mark Johnson	R-So.	OL	6-5	293	Vernon, B.C.
1	Bryce Smith	So.	DB	6-1	194	Bellevue, Wash.	30	Bennett Juve	Fr.	WR	6-0	180	Gilbert, Ariz.	70	Gavin Allen	R-So.	OL	6-6	284	Kennewick, Wash.
2	Nate Bell	R-Jr.	QB	5-10	194	Brentwood, Calif.	30	JT Taylor Jr.	R-Fr.	CB	6-1	162	Oxnard, Calif.	72	Jackson Ritchie	So.	OL	6-7	309	Billings, Mont.
3	Kevin Allen III	R-So.	RB	5-11	196	San Diego, Calif.	31	Jaylon Jenkins	R-Jr.	S	6-1	196	Federal Way, Wash.	73	Dane Gatterman	R-Jr.	OL	6-2	308	Lynden, Wash.
4	Isaiah Perez	R-Sr.	DT	6-2	299	Othello, Wash.	32	Jordan Pierro	R-So.	CB	5-10	171	Fresno, Calif.	74	Nick Savage	So.	OL	6-3	279	Issaquah, Wash.
5	Samarai Anderson	R-Jr.	LB	6-1	225	Corona, Calif.	33	Matt Eskridge II	Jr.	LB	6-1	224	Las Vegas, Nev.	75	Dylan Scott	So.	OL	6-4	267	Arlington, Wash.
6	Jaxon Branch	R-So.	WR	6-3	199	Chandler, Ariz.	34	JoJo Maxey-Johnson	R-Jr.	CB	6-2	196	Tacoma, Wash.	76	Ted Kuhrau	Fr.	OL	6-5	265	Lake Stevens, Wash.
7	Malik Dotson	Gr.	RB	6-0	212	Arlington, Wash.	35	Israel Nabors	Fr.	CB	5-11	170	Sumner, Wash.	77	Gabriel Rzany	R-Jr.	OL	6-7	308	Graham, Wash.
8	Ambrose Marsh	R-So.	DB	6-1	176	Renton, Wash.	36	Jayden Woodland	Fr.	S	6-1	180	Fife, Wash.	78	Nate Cervantes	Fr.	OL	6-4	285	Riverside, Calif.
9	Myles Mayovsky	R-Sr.	LB	6-1	220	Kennewick, Wash.	37	Vincent Macaluso	R-Jr.	LB	6-2	223	Upland, Calif.	79	Blake Speer	Fr.	OL	6-4	265	Chandler, Ariz.
10	LJ Roberts	R-Jr.	LB	5-10	212	San Diego, Calif.	38	Seanje Finister	So.	DB	6-3	200	Puyallup, Wash.	80	Drew Carlson	R-So.	WR	6-1	192	Olympia, Wash.
11	Kaden Rolfness	So.	QB	6-3	225	Puyallup, Wash.	39	Cameron Gilhuber	Fr.	S	6-1	175	Eugene, Ore.	81	Trenton Swanson	R-Fr.	WR	6-2	203	Camas, Wash.
11	Brady Annett	Fr.	QB	6-2	195	Newport Beach, Calif.	40	Deville Warner	Fr.	LB	6-2	202	Oxnard, Calif.	82	Zander Turner	So.	TE	6-4	250	Seattle, Wash.
11	Ben Voigtlaender	R-Sr.	DE	6-3	247	Spokane, Wash.	42	Ryan Johnson	Sr.	TE/FB	6-3	230	Camarillo, Calif.	83	Rylin Lang	So.	WR	6-0	186	Anacortes, Wash.
12	Dishawn Misa	R-Sr.	DE	6-2	245	Tacoma, Wash.	43	Jax Madden	Fr.	DE	6-4	215	Roseville, Calif.	85	Will McKissick	R-Fr.	TE	6-3	258	Westminster, Calif.
12	Jake Schakel	R-So.	QB	6-2	207	Puyallup, Wash.	44	Kayden Stuit	R-So.	TE	6-4	253	Lynden, Wash.	86	Will Hook	Gr.	TE	6-4	240	San Jose, Calif.
13	Bjorn B Birmingham Jr.	So.	S	6-2	193	San Bernardino, Calif.	45	Shea Robertson	R-So.	LB	6-1	222	Coeur d'Alene, Idaho	87	Joe Gallagher	Gr.	WR	6-2	185	Seattle, Wash.
13	Wesley Garrett	R-Sr.	WR	5-11	189	Mukilteo, Wash.	46	Jameson Wade	Fr.	LB	6-1	210	Mesa, Ariz.	88	Giulio Banchemo	Fr.	WR	6-1	200	Seattle, Wash.
14	David Cabrera	So.	WR	5-9	171	Goodyear, Ariz.	47	Zamarie Tellez	Fr.	CB	5-9	175	Federal Way, Wash.	88	Michael Zapata	Jr.	DL	6-5	245	San Francisco, Calif.
15	Boden Gardner	R-So.	WR	6-2	203	Spokane, Wash.	48	Jordan Rife	Fr.	LB	6-3	200	Everett, Wash.	89	Oliver Luebker	Fr.	WR	6-3	190	Portland, Ore.
16	Soren McKee	R-Sr.	K	6-0	204	Bend, Ore.	49	Kamden Segall	Fr.	TE	6-3	235	Phoenix, Ariz.	89	Grady Westlund	Fr.	DL	6-4	225	Chehalis, Wash.
17	Jamai East	R-Sr.	WR	6-1	202	Fairfield, Calif.	51	Gage Brumfield	So.	LB	6-2	227	Chehalis, Wash.	90	Justis La'ulu	R-Sr.	DT	6-2	333	Colorado Springs, Colo.
18	Cole Pruett	R-Sr.	WR	5-7	178	Ka'a'awa, Hawaii	52	Bennett Niell	Sr.	LS	6-2	224	Bothell, Wash.	91	Morgan Dodson	Fr.	K/P	6-2	215	Pasco, Wash.
19	Sean Embree Jr.	So.	WR	6-4	187	Orange, Calif.	53	Carson Moore	R-Fr.	DE	6-4	231	Rancho Palos Verdes, Calif.	92	Silas Stewman	Fr.	DL	6-4	280	Ellensburg, Wash.
20	Dre Greeley	R-Sr.	CB	5-11	195	Monroe, La.	54	Drew Van Nuys	Fr.	LS	6-2	210	Chico, Calif.	93	Ben Tameifuna	Fr.	DT	5-11	302	Corona, Calif.
21	Messiah Washington	So.	CB	6-0	188	Los Angeles, Calif.	56	Kyle Stahlecker	R-Jr.	OL	6-6	305	Citrus Heights, Calif.	94	Jaden Radke	Sr.	DE	6-3	253	Okanogan, Wash.
22	Wilson Medina	So.	RB	6-0	209	Burnt Ranch, Calif.	57	Michael Gradle	So.	OL	6-5	295	Moorpark, Calif.	95	Waylon Romero	R-So.	DL	6-3	297	Spokane Valley, Wash.
23	Marcus Nixon	So.	S	6-1	209	Bellingham, Wash.	58	Coley Abcar	Sr.	OL	6-5	283	Chico, Calif.	97	Luke Faccone	So.	P	6-0	191	Puyallup, Wash.
24	CJ Bozeman	So.	RB	5-11	203	Grand Terrace, Calif.	59	Clan McCarrell	R-So.	DL	6-3	284	Las Vegas, Nev.	97	Cody Gasseling	Fr.	TE	6-2	245	Yakima, Wash.
25	Landen Kahai	So.	CB	6-0	184	Tacoma, Wash.	61	Andrew Langer	So.	OL	6-3	285	Carlsbad, Calif.	98	Jaice Tupea	So.	DT	6-2	279	South Jordan, Utah
25	Israel Robles	Jr.	RB	5-10	190	Sanger, Calif.	63	Henry Hatada	R-Fr.	OL	6-2	275	Rocklin, Calif.	98	Tyson Wurzer	Fr.	TE	6-1	202	Redding, Calif.
26	De'Markus Barnes	Fr.	RB	5-11	185	Los Angeles, Calif.	64	Brady Ackerman	So.	OL	6-4	292	Everson, Wash.	99	Gauge Larsen	So.	DE	6-3	209	Rigby, Idaho
26	Deuce Carr	Jr.	DB	5-10	180	Oakley, Calif.	65	Simione Olakauatu	R-Fr.	OL	6-3	320	Hahaina, Hawaii							

Dunn

From Page 2

Dunn played baseball growing up. He was an outfielder just like his grandfather. He also played basketball, where he was a versatile role player.

He steered away from those sports and focused his time and energy more on football at Chandler High School in Chandler, Arizona. It was during his freshman season that he knew he wanted to pursue college football.

He played safety and some linebacker in high school after he also played running back at the youth level. In three varsity seasons, he totaled 127 tackles, 8.5 tackles for loss, three sacks, four forced fumbles, one interception and one fumble recovery.

“That’s really what I loved,” he said. “I loved the competition. A lot of one-on-one matchups, I love being able to win that. It’s fun. It’s what I was around and enjoyed.”

Devin Dunn originally signed with Air Force, an FBS team that plays in the Mountain West Conference, in December 2021. By April 2022, he had decommitted and later walked on with Arizona, an FBS team which was then playing in the Pac-12 Conference before it moved to the Big 12 in 2024.

Football ran in his family. Murphy, his grandfather, turned down a football offer from Arizona State when the A’s drafted him in the 15th round in 1973. James Dunn, his father, played defensive back for ASU in the 1990s.

“I knew my dad played college football at Arizona State University, so I always looked up to him,” he said. “I knew that could be something I could do. My friends played football too and I was around them all the time. They play a lot of sports. So really just the people I was around motivated me.”

His time at Arizona began where so many other walk-ons start: on the scout team. He didn’t play a single snap in 2022 as a true freshman as he preserved his redshirt while the Wildcats posted a 5-7 overall record.

He played in only one game in 2023 when they went 10-3 overall and finished the season ranked No. 11 in the AP Top 25 poll. That appearance came in the final game of the season in the Alamo Bowl, but he didn’t record a stat.

After 2023, head coach Jedd Fisch left to be the Washington Huskies head coach. Dunn remained at Arizona having to prove himself again as Brent Brennan took over heading into the 2024 season.

“I definitely learned a lot coming in as a walk-on with a chip on my shoulder,” he said. “Then the first two years being on scout team just learning and trying to empty myself every day.”



BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

Montana defensive back Devin Dunn (18) walks onto the field during the college football game against Idaho on Oct. 17 at Washington-Grizzly Stadium in Missoula. Dunn transferred to the Grizzlies this past offseason for his final year of eligibility.

He played in the 2024 season opener on special teams but didn’t tally any stats. That ended up being his only appearance all season as Arizona finished with a 4-8 record.

All the momentum he felt he was making got stalled when he had a stress fractured in his shin on his left leg. He spent the rest of the semester in the training room doing rehab work so he could make his way back to the field.

The challenging situation gave him an opportunity to grow and learn more about himself. He felt he came back even stronger mentally.

“I learned that I got resilience,” he said. “And if I really put my mind to something, like coming back, then I can do it. I learned a lot about myself that way. And you can apply that in all aspects of your life, whether it be work or sports or relationships.”

He returned to the gridiron for the 2025 season, started on three of the four special teams units and got his first playing time on defense in a game. He totaled nine tackles and one pass defended in 13 games as Arizona closed with a 9-4 record and lost in the Holiday Bowl.

He decided to enter the transfer portal after 15 games played over four seasons with the Wildcats. He was looking for an opportunity for more playing time while still staying at a high level of college football.

He was worried he might get stuck in the portal without a team. He loved his visit to

Montana and soon became “ecstatic” and “really, really happy” when the Griz not only offered him but wanted him to come play on scholarship.

“Just being on my own self mission, I’ve been self motivated really,” he said. “It’s been my goal to play and do what I love at the collegiate level, so I did what I had to do and now I’m here. I wanted to do well for my family. But really at the end of the day, you got to do what you want to do.”

Dunn signed out of the portal with the previous coaching staff. By the time he joined over the summer, the defensive staff and scheme had been overhauled with a new coordinator among three new assistants on that side.

His versatility and ability to pick up the defense quickly allowed him to play both cornerback and safety during fall camp. The Griz saw him fitting in more at safety, so he joined assistant coach Wes Nurse’s group.

Nurse noticed his high football IQ, which wasn’t surprising to him when he learned Dunn played at powerhouse Chandler High School. He also saw how Dunn was able to adapt to the defense quickly because Dunn had been in an Arizona defense that ran a 3-3-5 and UM still plays with five defensive backs.

“Going through installs, he did a pretty good job picking it up,” Nurse said. “After kind of the first week he was here, it was like, man, that guy can make some plays,

he can do some things. That was definitely promising from the player standpoint. Then once we got in the film room and started talking, you figure out that the kid is a very football smart person.”

Dunn didn’t made the season-opening depth chart, but he did play in that first game and has appeared in all eight games so far. He has started the past three games as the secondary has been decimated by injuries.

He’s taking advantage of the playing time and is having the most productive season of his college career. He has totaled 38 tackles, one tackle for loss and broke up a pass that led to an interception by a teammate against Idaho.

He’s soaking in the opportunity and is enjoying his teammates and the Griz fan base while he works on his Master of Business Administration at UM after he got his bachelor’s degree in finance at ASU.

As always, he’ll keep fighting.

“I’ve proven really that I belong to be here,” he said. “There were times my freshman year where there was doubt, just self doubt. But really to be able to overcome that and know that I’m supposed to be here, this is right where I’m supposed to be.”

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Seumalo

From Page 3

Q: How has coach Jaylen (Johnson) impacted you?

A: Coach Jay comes with a lot of knowledge, playing at UW (University of Washington) and playing a little bit in the NFL. He teaches us a lot that we didn't understand last year and we didn't get taught last year. It's just a great experience learning from a new coach every year.

Q: The defense has suffered quite a few losses throughout the season. How has it been for you and your teammates navigating that?

A: Jake (Mason) really set a high standard when he came here, but I think my whole part of this was just like, 'How can I replace Jake while playing at his standard?' So there's not a huge drop. But yeah, it's just how can we, or how can I, be a great addition to this team with the great men that we have in the group.

Q: What made you want to go down the JUCO path out of high school?

A: So essentially, I was supposed to go to MSU Northern, and I was committed there my senior year. But I found out when I was signing my papers, they wanted me to play offensive line. I didn't think that was me. So I thought of going to junior college, and my cousin was at the junior college that I went to, and it was pretty much just like, 'How much do I really want to go to the next level?'

Q: Now that you're a D-I football player, do you feel like those experiences helped you get to where you are now?

A: Yeah, I think when you get to this level, you're trying not to plateau, if that makes sense. You want to keep getting better. There's a lot of great players on this team, a lot of great players in the FCS, Big Sky, so like, 'How can I be

one of the top players and top players every week?'

Q: What made you want to come to Montana?

A: I didn't take a visit here. I just kind of bet on myself. This was the only big offer I had. I mean, I had a couple of Division II offers, but Montana was the biggest offer I had. I kind of just went with it, trusted that God had a plan for me here.

Q: What differences stand out the most between where you've been before and playing for Montana?

A: You play over here in Montana, and you appreciate the game of football and the fans. They bring a great environment to our games, it's just really fun to play here every week. I do not like travel games, I'd rather play here because the environment is so crazy.

Q: Your Twitter profile picture includes the flag of American Samoa, what does that heritage mean to you?

A: I'm really proud, man. We're trying to make the Polynesian culture proud of who we become and who we are, just trying to represent our culture in every which way. You know, I'm proud to be Samoan and Hawaiian. Culture is everything to us.

Q: What are some of your hobbies?

A: I'm really a homebody, but this summer I started going golfing, going out to like the big lakes over here,



BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

Montana defensive lineman Zekiel Seumalo (92) lines up on the line of scrimmage during the college football game against Idaho on Oct. 17 at Washington-Grizzly Stadium in Missoula. Seumalo played his first two seasons at Allan Hancock, a community college in California.

hiking. But I really like golfing. I'm starting to try to put a bag together with all the clubs I need.

Q: Do you hold your own on the courses against your teammates?

A: No way. No, I claim I'm a scratch golfer, but I'm really not.

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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