

GRIZZLY GAME DAY

Missoulian

ROSTER REVAMP

BREAKING DOWN THE GRIZZLIES' OVERHAUL

SHANNA MADISON, MISSOULIAN

SCHEDULE BREAKDOWN, PAGE 3 • SPELTZ PICKS THE BIG SKY, PAGE 4 • PRESEASON POLLS AND MORE, PAGE 5

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25 observations on 2025 roster

FRANK GOGOLA
406 MT Sports

Something old, something new, something borrowed...

There's a whole lot of newness on the Montana football team's roster for the 2025 season. And a large chunk of that is in a sense borrowed as the Grizzlies brought in a massive group of transfers over the past several months.

They'll soon get to show how well they married the returning starters, backups and reserve players with transfers, high school recruits and new coaching staff members as the Griz embark on a 12-game regular season starting Sept. 6.

Here are 25 observations on the Grizzlies' 2025 roster:

1. The Griz head into this season with 108 players on their roster after they had 114 in 2024. They have to adhere to roster limits after UM opted into the House settlement, which allows the athletic department to provide revenue sharing dollars to student-athletes starting this year. They were permitted to temporarily go over the roster limit of 105 as they grandfathered in players.

2. Of the 114 players on the 2024 roster, less than half of them are back this year. Only 56 of them, or 49.1%, will suit up in a Montana uniform in 2025. The Griz lost 58 players, or 50.9%, from last year. They added 52 newcomers.

3. Of the 56 returners, only 12 have started a game in a Griz uniform. Nine of the 12 are on offense: OL Liam Brown (28 games), RB Eli Gillman (24), TE Evan Shafer (16) OL Cannon Panfiloff (15), OL Cade Klimczak (14), QB Keali'i Ah Yat (6), TE Jake Olson (4), OL Dillon Botner (3) and WR Drew Deck (1).

4. The defense has three players who've combined for just four career starts at UM. Linebacker Caleb Otlewski has made two starts while safety TJ Rausch and nose tackle Jareb Ramos have each started once. All starts came in 2024.

5. Botner, Shafer and Klimczak had all appeared to be moving on after the 2024 season. However, they were each granted a waiver, decided to take advantage of that opportunity and chose to play their final year at Montana.

6. Of the 56 returners, only 38 have taken a



BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

Montana running backs Hashim Jones (28), Malae Fonoti (7), Stevie Rucker Jr. (21) and Eli Gillman (10) during fall football camp on Aug. 12 at Dornblaser Field in Missoula. Running back is the only position on offense or defense where the Grizzlies didn't add a transfer.

snap in a Griz uniform. Of those 38, 18 are on offense: Botner (39 games), Brown (37), Deck (32), Olson (32), Gillman (31), Shafer (29), Panfiloff (26), OL Lucas Freitas (21), Ah Yat (16), Klimczak (14), RB Stevie Rucker (14), OL Everett Johnson (13), WR Ian Finch (12), RB Malae Fonoti (3), WR Lekeldrick Bridges (3), OL Austin Buehler (2), WR Jordan Dever (1) and WR Cameron Gurnsey (1).

7. Of the 38 who've played a snap, 17 are on defense: Rausch (39 games), DE Matai Mata'afa (28), Ramos (18), S Tanner Huff (18), LB Clay Oven (13), CB Kyon Loud (13), LB Cy Stevenson (13), DE Jake Mason (13), LB Hayden Opitz (13), CB Kenzel Lawler (13), Otlewski (12), DE Kellen Detrick (12), S Kade Cutler (11), LB Geno Leonard (8), CB Prince Ford (6), S Kade Boyd (3) and CB Elijah Brady (1).

8. Three of the 38 who've played a game in a

Montana uniform are on special teams: long snapper Grayson Pibal (43 games), kicker/punter Ty Morrison (14) and kicker/punter Jo Silver (3).

9. Among the 18 returners who've never played a snap at UM are sophomore QB Gage Sliter and OL Tate Templeton, and 16 freshmen who didn't take the field while redshirting in 2024. Combined with 52 newcomers, that means 70 of the 108 players, or 64.8%, have yet to play a game in a Griz uniform.

10. Just 16 players have appeared in a game for the Griz in two separate seasons. They are Deck, Shafer, Olson, Panfiloff, Brown, Botner, Detrick, Mata'afa, Leonard, Rausch, Huff, Pibal, Gillman, Ramos, Ah Yat and Freitas.

11. Only 14 players on the roster played a

snap for Montana in the 2023 season as the Griz won the Big Sky title and were the FCS national runner-up. They are Gillman, Ah Yat, Deck, Shafer, Olson, Panfiloff, Brown, Freitas, Detrick, Mata'afa, Huff, Rausch, Ramos and Pibal.

12. Helping to fill the void of so many departures are 52 newcomers. Of them, 29 are incoming transfers, 22 are high school signees and one is a prep school addition. Of those 29 transfers, 21 are juniors or seniors.

13. The Griz are rostering 30 seniors, of which 18 are returners and 12 are transfers. Their 14 juniors are five returners and nine transfers. With 20 sophomores, 15 are returners and five are transfers. Of 21 red-shirt freshmen, 18 are returners and three are transfers. There are 23 true freshmen.

Please see **ROSTER**, Page 7

12 thoughts on 12-game schedule

FRANK GOGOLA
406 MT Sports

The Montana football team will play 12 regular season games this year, which will become the norm in the FCS starting in 2026.

Teams in the subdivision have normally played 11 games in the regular season except when the calendar fell a certain way to allow enough Saturdays for 12 games, most recently in 2024 and 2019.

This will be the last season with eight Big Sky Conference games as the league is moving to nine in 2026 because of the change to 12 regular season games.

As the Grizzlies prepare to kick off the 2025 season on Sept. 6 in Missoula, here are 12 observations on their 12-game schedule:

1. Montana will play 12 consecutive weeks throughout the regular season with no week off, although they could potentially earn a first-round bye in the FCS playoffs. The last time the Griz went an entire regular season without a bye week in between games came in 2008. They played 12 straight games from Sept. 6 through Nov. 22, which is coincidentally the exact same start and end dates this year. In that 2008 campaign, also under head coach Bobby Hauck, the Griz won the Big Sky regular season championship with a 7-1 conference record and finished as the FCS national runner-up with a 14-2 overall record.

2. The Griz bye week technically comes Week 1, which allowed them to start fall camp later. In looking for a 12th regular season game to fill their final slot on Aug. 30, they considered going on the road for an FBS game, although the options didn't make financial sense, or signing a home-and-home contract with an FCS team, although those series would've had to start on the road, according to UM athletic director Kent Haslam. The third option was to find a home game Oct. 18 on the week off in the middle of Big Sky games. Luckily, Sacred Heart was looking for a game too and was open to going on the road.

3. With the Griz bringing in Sacred Heart, that will give them eight home games for the first time in program history. Sacred Heart is in its second season as an FCS independent after playing in the Northeast Conference. The Pioneers will be joining the Coastal Athletic Association next



SHANNA MADISON, MISSOULIAN

The Grizzlies run drills during football practice at the University of Montana on Aug. 25 in Missoula. They open their season Sept. 6 at home against Central Washington.

year. This will be the first time that an FCS team has played eight regular season home games. Joining the Griz in accomplishing that feat this year is Tennessee State. However, the Tigers don't play their home games on campus, instead taking the gridiron at Nissan Stadium, home of the NFL's Tennessee Titans.

4. The Griz open by hosting NCAA Division II Central Washington at 6 p.m. on Sept. 6. They're the last D-I team to play their first game, except for the Ivy League teams, who start their 10-game schedule with no bye weeks in mid-September. The only other non-Ivy team off Week 0 and 1 is Villanova, which starts 6 p.m. ET Sept. 6. Aside from UM, Nova and the Ivies, every FCS team plays Week 1, nine of which played Week 0. Stanford is the only FBS team off Week 1, but it played Week 0. Four D-I teams — Iowa State, Idaho State, Fresno State and Kansas — will finish three games before UM starts its first.

5. The Griz will play Missouri Valley teams in two nonconference games, which are the second part of home-and-home series. They host North Dakota on Sept. 13 after losing 27-24 last year on the road as they collapsed in the second half. The Fighting Hawks have a new head coach in Eric Schmidt after posting an 5-7 record last year. Montana also hosts Indiana State on Sept. 20 after beating the Sycamores 49-14 on the road in 2022. North Dakota is one of three opponents the Griz will have a chance to get revenge against after losing last year. The other teams are Weber State and Montana State.

6. The Little Brown Stein returns this season as Montana and Idaho renew their rivalry. They didn't play each other last year, which was because of the Big Sky's unbalanced league schedule. Montana won the most recent contest, 23-21, in Moscow, Idaho, in 2023. The Vandals won the last meeting in Missoula, 30-23 in 2022. They're led by first-year head coach Thomas Ford,

who took over after Jason Eck left for New Mexico. The game against Idaho is one of two games on ESPN 2, along with Sacramento State, and one of four night games, along with Sac State, Idaho State and Central Washington.

7. The Griz play only four road games and make their first trip in their fifth game. That's a bus ride to play Idaho State on Oct. 4. At least one D-I team plays its first road game at a later date: Missouri is home until Oct. 18. UM returns from ISU to host Cal Poly for homecoming and doesn't get on a plane until Oct. 25 for a trip to Sacramento State. The Griz play at Weber State the next week, the only time this year they'll play back-to-back road games. They played the Hornets and Wildcats in consecutive road games in 2022 and lost both outings. They do get an extra day to prep in between those this time.

Please see **SCHEDULE**, Page 6

HOW WE SEE THE BIG SKY

BILL SPELTZ
406 MT Sports

In pondering Montana State's opener at seventh-ranked Oregon Saturday, my mind drifts back to last August.

Those mighty Ducks had their hands full at home against an Idaho team that finished third in the Big Sky Conference. Oregon's lead was a measly three points with 6 minutes left and the Ducks escaped with a 24-14 victory.



CARSON CASHION

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VICTOR FLORES

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FRANK GOGOLA

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BILL SPELTZ

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this fall. I'm predicting MSU will give the Ducks a scare but the home team will prevail. My 406 MT Sports colleagues, on

Considering Montana State won the Big Sky last year and reached the FCS title game, Oregon is in for an even tougher FCS test Saturday afternoon, right? After all, the Ducks lost their star quarterback, Dillon Gabriel, who is now battling for playing time for the Cleveland Browns behind Joe Flacco.

The problem, at least as far as MSU is concerned, is the Ducks have no doubt been reminded about that Idaho game ad nauseum. They probably learned some valuable lessons and they'll be primed to pounce Saturday. Or peck, or whatever it is Ducks do when they attack.

Montana State dual-threat QB Justin Lamson, a Stanford transfer, has big shoes to fill in replacing Tommy Mellott. That is, assuming Lamson is the starter. Whoever it is, he will find comfort in knowing he is lining up behind arguably the best offensive front in the FCS.

It all adds up to an intriguing Week 1 matchup in Eugene, Oregon — even if you're a Montana Grizzly fan.

Everyone in the Big Sky is curious about what the Cats have to offer since they were the class of the league last year and they're picked to win the Big Sky again



Montana State running back and Missoula Sentinel grad Adam Jones (23) runs past Idaho's K.J. Trujillo in the FCS quarterfinals last December in Bozeman. The Cats will try to pull a big upset in their season debut Saturday at FBS powerhouse Oregon.

SHAWN RAECKE, FOR THE BOZEMAN DAILY CHRONICLE

the other hand, are predicting a convincing Oregon win.

Here's a look at Saturday's games:

No. 2 Montana State at No. 7 (FBS) Oregon, 2 p.m. TV: Big Ten Network. Ducks defensive end Matayo Uiagalelei (No. 10) might be the best player on the field Saturday. He is ranked as the 20th best in the nation by ESPN. Oregon ranked third in the Big Ten in sacks last year with 40 and is sure to pile up a lot of them this season with Uiagalelei serving as a catalyst. Montana State's offensive line has a tall task. If the Cats can somehow neutralize Oregon's defensive front and run the football, we could have an exciting game. If not, it could be ugly for the revamped Bobcats. **Speltz:** Oregon 24, Montana State 17. **Gogola:** Ducks 31, Cats 13. **Flores:** Oregon 48, Montana State 24. **Cashion:** Oregon 51, Montana State 17.

No. 15 Sacramento State at No. 3 South Dakota State, 5 p.m. TV: ESPN+. It's hard to think about the Hornets without harkening back to last month. An FBS committee denied Sac State entry into the FBS because of a lack of a formal conference invite. The Hornets aren't giving up, but for now the football team is focused on trying to earn a playoff berth in its final season in the Big Sky. A win Saturday would be a great first step, but it's not going to happen. SDSU boasts a 29-game home winning streak. **Speltz:** Jackrabbits 41, Hornets 21. **Gogola:** Jackrabbits 35, Hornets 24. **Flores:** SDSU 27, Sac State 17. **Cashion:** South Dakota State 38, Sacramento State 24.

No. 8 UC Davis at Utah Tech, 8 p.m. TV: ESPN+. The Aggies were ranked seventh in the American Football Coaches Association FCS preseason poll,

just ahead of Montana. The Grizzlies are ranked just ahead of Davis in the Stats Perform poll. Anyway, the No. 7 ranking is the highest preseason spot the Aggies have held in six years. They'll probably look the part against a Trailblazers team that went 1-11 last season and may have trouble stopping the run. **Speltz:** Aggies 30, Trailblazers 14. **Gogola:** Aggies 42, Trailblazers 13. **Flores:** Davis 38, Utah Tech 10. **Cashion:** UC Davis 48, Utah Tech 10.

No. 12 Idaho at Washington State, 8 p.m. TV: The CW. The Cougs are still a member of the Pac-12 Conference, in case you're interested. The same Pac-12 that just added Texas State for next season. Weird. WSU had a topsy turvy season last year, starting 8-1 before losing its last four games. But the Cougs are still a solid FBS team and they'll be focused for a game against the new-look Vandals, who will be travelling just nine miles to get to Pullman, Washington. It should be a fun atmosphere. **Speltz:** Cougs 38, Vandals 17. **Gogola:** Cougs 35, Vandals 20. **Flores:** Wazzu 41, Idaho 21. **Cashion:** Washington State 35, Idaho 21.

Eastern Washington at No. 5 Incarnate Word (0-1), 5 p.m. TV: ESPN+. I was watching former EWU quarterback Vernon Adams Jr. playing for the Calgary Stampeders a few weeks ago and thought to myself, geez, the Eagles aren't what they used to be. Last year they finished sixth in the Big Sky and they'll be hard-pressed to crack the top five this year. Look for UIW to start strong after losing to Nicholls last Saturday. **Speltz:** Cardinals 48, Eagles 21. **Gogola:** Cards 28, Eags 24. **Flores:** UIW 31, EWU 28. **Cashion:** Incarnate Word 38, EWU 28.

Weber State at James Madison, 4 p.m. TV: ESPN+. The Wildcats finished 4-8 last season. Now they're faced with a Dukes team that finished last year in style, beating Western Kentucky in the Boca Raton Bowl in December. Look for James Madison to steamroll. **Speltz:** Dukes 52, Wildcats 14. **Gogola:** Dukes 45, Wildcats 13. **Flores:** JMU 42, Weber 10. **Cashion:** James Madison 28, Weber State 10.

Cal Poly at San Diego, 6 p.m.: This is a tough call. Last year, the Toreros edged the Mustangs at home in the opener for both teams, 27-21. San Diego went on to post an 8-3 record while Cal Poly went 3-8. It may be another close one but I'm going with the home team. **Speltz:** Toreros 30, Mustangs 24. **Gogola:** San Diego 31, Cal Poly 20. **Flores:** Cal Poly 17, San Diego 14. **Cashion:** Cal Poly 27, San Diego 17.

Portland State (0-1) at BYU, 6 p.m. TV: ESPN+. BYU is just outside the top 25 in the AP preseason poll. The Cougars are projected to be a top contender in the Big 12 Conference. The Vikings will definitely have their hands full. **Speltz:** Cougars 55, Vikings 10. **Gogola:** BYU 56, Vikings 0. **Flores:** BYU 52, PSU 14. **Cashion:** BYU 42, Portland State 3.

Idaho State (0-1) at Southern Utah, 6:30 p.m.: With a game under their belt and a strong showing against UNLV, the Bengals are sure to make this a close one. But I like the Thunderbirds to win in their home debut in scorching heat after finishing last season on a three-game roll. **Speltz:** Thunderbirds 27, Bengals 24. **Gogola:** Bengals 38, T-Birds 28. **Flores:** ISU 38, SUU 35. **Cashion:** Idaho State 38, Southern Utah 35.

No. 19 Northern Arizona at No. 11 (FBS) Arizona State, 7 p.m. ESPN+. It's always fun to see a Big Sky team square off against a big-timer like the Sun Devils. It may not be so much fun for the Lumberjacks by the third quarter. **Speltz:** Sun Devils 60, Jacks 17. **Gogola:** ASU 42, NAU 17. **Flores:** ASU 45, NAU 17. **Cashion:** Arizona State 49, Northern Arizona 13.

Chadron State at Northern Colorado, 1 p.m. The Bears aren't exactly a force, finishing with a five-game losing streak and a 1-11 record last season. But they'll be good enough to knock off the Division II Eagles in Greeley. **Speltz:** Bears 24, Eagles 17. **Gogola:** UNC 23, Chadron State 13. **Flores:** UNC 20, Chadron State 17. **Cashion:** Northern Colorado 27, Chadron State 20.

MONTANA GRIZZLIES 2025 ROSTER

No.	Name	Year	Position	Height	Weight	Hometown
0	Monte Gillman	R-Fr.	WR	5-8	162	Dassel, Minn.
0	Terahiti Wolfe	So.	S	5-11	173	Kahalu'u, Hawaii
2	Drew Deck	R-Sr.	WR	5-9	165	Kalispell, Mont.
2	Micah Harper	R-Sr.	S	5-10	194	Chandler, Ariz.
3	Brooks Davis	R-Fr.	WR	6-0	174	Brentwood, Calif.
3	Jeilani Davis	R-Fr.	S	6-0	204	Inglewood, Calif.
4	Blake Bohannon	R-Sr.	WR	6-1	195	Woodstock, Ga.
4	Dane Parker	R-Fr.	S	6-1	175	Puyallup, Wash.
5	Ian Finch	R-Jr.	WR	6-3	209	Missoula, Mont.
5	Kyon Loud	So.	CB	6-2	175	San Mateo, Calif.
6	Prince Ford	R-Sr.	CB	5-11	170	Concord, N.C.
6	Michael Wortham	R-Sr.	WR	5-9	190	North Highlands, Calif.
7	Malae Fonoti	R-Fr.	RB	5-11	207	Laie, Hawaii
7	Kash Goicoechea	R-Fr.	S	6-1	197	Kalispell, Mont.
8	Keali'i Ah Yat	R-So.	QB	6-1	200	Kaneohe, Hawaii
8	Michael Lawler	R-Sr.	CB	6-0	190	Corona, Calif.
9	Justus Breston	Sr.	CB	5-11	178	Atlanta, Ga.
9	Jordan Dever	R-So.	WR	6-0	174	Spokane, Wash.
10	Eli Gillman	R-Jr.	RB	6-0	213	Dassel, Minn.
10	TJ Rausch	R-Sr.	S	6-3	208	Missoula, Mont.
11	Cameron Gurnsey	R-So.	WR	6-1	197	Butte, Mont.
11	Elijahah Tolbert	R-Sr.	LB	6-1	232	Chicago, Ill.
12	Elijah Brady	R-So.	CB	6-1	172	Seattle, Wash.
12	Gage Sliter	R-So.	QB	6-1	193	Kalispell, Mont.
13	Brock Beaner	Fr.	S	6-0	193	Anacortes, Wash.
13	Lekeldrick Bridges	R-Fr.	WR	5-11	170	Cedar Hill, Texas
14	DeAnte Gentry	Fr.	DB	5-11	169	Fort Worth, Texas
14	Korbin Hendrix	R-So.	WR	6-3	192	McKinney, Texas
16	Jake Jensen	R-Sr.	QB	6-1	215	Pleasant Grove, Utah
17	Kade Boyd	R-So.	S	6-0	197	Billings, Mont.
17	Luke Flowers	R-Fr.	QB	6-1	188	Rigby, Idaho
18	Cody Schweikert	R-Fr.	QB	6-3	212	Columbia Falls, Mont.
19	Drew Price	Fr.	QB	5-10	171	Jacksonville, Fla.
20	Sage Salopek	Fr.	CB	6-0	168	Seattle, Wash.
21	Stevie Rocker Jr.	R-Sr.	RB	6-0	210	Tucson, Ariz.
23	Rashid Mansour	Jr.	CB	6-0	163	Fresno, Calif.
24	Diezel Wilkinson	So.	S	6-0	193	Spokane, Wash.
25	Brady Beaner	Fr.	S	6-0	187	Anacortes, Wash.
26	Chase Cook	Fr.	RB	5-11	198	Red Lodge, Mont.
28	Hashim Jones	Fr.	RB	6-0	208	Hartford, Conn.
29	Tanner Huff	R-Sr.	S	6-0	210	Butte, Mont.
30	Kade Cutler	R-Jr.	S	6-0	200	Phillipsburg, Mont.
30	Tommy Running Rabbit	R-Fr.	RB	6-1	195	Browning, Mont.
31	Geo Leonard	R-Sr.	LB	5-11	230	Missoula, Mont.
32	Peyton Wing	Jr.	LB	6-0	229	Sumner, Wash.
33	Taylor Jones	Fr.	LB	6-1	205	Missoula, Mont.
34	Talen Reynolds	R-Fr.	RB	5-11	170	Missoula, Mont.
35	Grady Walker	R-Fr.	LB	6-4	224	Missoula, Mont.
36	Ty Morrison	Sr.	KP	6-3	220	Valencia, Calif.
37	Garrett Speer	R-Fr.	DB	6-0	191	Sherwood, Ore.
37	Clay Oven	R-So.	LB	6-2	216	Billings, Mont.
38	Caleb Moran	So.	LB	6-1	210	Milton, Ga.
39	Fynn Ridgeway	R-So	S	6-1	204	Whitefish, Mont.
40	Colton Lentz	Fr.	LB	6-3	213	Nooksack, Wash.
42	Giovanni Pifferini	Jr.	DL	6-4	230	Placerville, Calif.
43	Grayson Pibal	R-Sr.	LS	6-3	214	Clackamas, Ore.
44	Titus Rohrer	R-Jr.	TE	6-7	240	Bryan, Ohio
45	Caleb Otlewski	R-So.	LB	6-4	241	Melissa, Texas
46	Jo Silver	R-Jr.	KP	6-0	213	Fremont, Ohio
47	Kellen Detrick	R-Sr.	DE	6-3	240	Havre, Mont.
48	Styles Goodman	Fr.	LB	6-2	234	Austin, Texas
49	Isaac Keim	R-Fr.	DL	6-4	265	Kalispell, Mont.
50	Sam Merriman	Fr.	LB	6-0	225	Seattle, Wash.
51	Spencer Tripp	Fr.	DL	5-11	264	Missoula, Mont.
52	Cy Stevenson	R-So.	LB	6-2	220	Libby, Mont.
54	Bridger Salvevold	Fr.	LB	6-2	207	Culbertson, Mont.
55	Austin Buehler	R-So.	OL	6-5	285	Helena, Mont.
56	Hunter Peck	R-Sr.	DE	6-2	252	Windsor, Colo.
57	Jake Mason	R-So.	DL	6-2	250	Ferndale, Wash.
58	Solomon Tuliaupupu	Gr.	LB	6-3	242	Pomona, Calif.
59	Hayden Opitz	R-So.	LB	6-2	230	Helena, Mont.
60	Dillon Botner	Gr.	OL	6-6	280	Whitefish, Mont.
61	Lincoln Hoefler	Fr.	OL	6-6	279	Everson, Wash.
62	Everett Johnson	R-Sr.	OL	6-7	290	Turlock, Calif.
63	Kaiko Kanakaole	Fr.	OL	6-5	335	Kapa'a, Hawaii
64	Matt Hilden	R-Fr.	OL	6-6	309	Santa Rosa, Calif.
65	Dylan Jemtegaard	R-Sr.	OL	6-4	281	Yelm, Wash.
66	Ezra Meyer	Fr.	OL	6-5	290	Missoula, Mont.
68	Torin Jeske	R-Fr.	OL	6-6	271	Bozeman, Mont.
69	Cannon Panfiloff	R-Sr.	OL	6-6	294	Roy, Utah
70	Colin Amick	R-Fr.	OL	6-6	292	Sammamish, Wash.
71	Quinlan Hyatt	Fr.	OL	6-7	285	Spokane, Wash.
72	Cade Klimczak	Gr.	OL	6-1	285	Rockford, Mich.
73	Trevor Steinbach	R-Fr.	OL	6-5	300	Sammamish, Wash.
74	Tate Templeton	R-So.	OL	6-3	290	Missoula, Mont.
75	Jose Balver-Mendoza	R-Fr.	OL	6-5	287	Athens, Ga.
76	Patrick Matan	Gr.	OL	6-4	295	Chevy Chase, Md.
77	Carter Bowen	Jr.	OL	6-7	318	Dawson, Minn.
78	Lucas Freitas	R-So.	OL	6-6	318	Snoqualmie, Wash.
79	Liam Brown	R-Sr.	OL	6-5	316	Beaverton, Ore.
80	Jammel Ward	Fr.	WR	6-4	170	Nacogdoches, Texas
81	Josh Gale	R-Sr.	TE	6-4	243	Gilbert, Ariz.
84	Evan Shafer	Gr.	TE	6-5	270	Connersville, Ind.
85	Bridger Smith	Fr.	WR	5-11	170	Kalispell, Mont.
86	Weston Adams	R-Jr.	WR	5-11	192	Shell, Wyo.
87	Jake Olson	R-Sr.	TE	6-7	260	Butte, Mont.
88	Malaki Davis	Fr.	TE	6-5	230	Tacoma, Wash.
89	Danny Sirmon	R-Fr.	TE	6-6	255	Missoula, Mont.
90	Jareb Ramos	R-Jr.	DL	6-4	287	Centennial, Colo.
91	Cooper Buffington	Fr.	DL	6-4	252	Winfield, Iowa
92	Zekiel Seumalo	Jr.	DL	6-0	265	Kent, Wash.
93	Cole Muilenburg	R-Fr.	DL	6-5	246	Gig Harbor, Wash.
94	Cole Harpole	Fr.	DL	6-3	221	Gunter, Texas
95	Derek Moreland	Sr.	DL	6-1	262	Fresno, Calif.
96	Logan Knaevelsrud	Fr.	DL	6-4	235	Snoqualmie, Wash.
97	Hayden Schwartz	R-Jr.	DL	6-4	248	Jacksonville, Fla.
98	Matai Mata'afa	R-Sr.	DL	6-1	236	Lahaina, Hawaii
99	Braydon Bailey	R-Jr.	DL	6-2	280	Kona, Hawaii

MONTANA GRIZZLIES 2025 COACHING STAFF

Position	Name	Position	Name	Position	Name
Head coach	Bobby Hauck	Tight ends	Rob Phenicie	Defensive line	Mike Linehan
OC/quarterbacks	Brent Pease	Running backs	Justin Green	Senior analyst	Kent Baer
Co-DC/linebackers	Roger Cooper	Wide receivers	Bobby Kennedy	Defensive analyst	Alex Gubner
Co-DC/safeties	Tim Hauck	Cornerbacks	Kim McCloud	Offensive analyst	Eric Price
		Offensive line	Cameron Norcross		

MONTANA GRIZZLIES 2025 SCHEDULE

Date	Time	Opponent	Location	TV
Sept. 6	6 p.m.	C. Washington	Missoula	Scripps Sports
Sept. 13	1 p.m.	North Dakota	Missoula	Scripps Sports
Sept. 20	1 p.m.	Indiana State	Missoula	Scripps Sports
Sept. 27	8:15 p.m.	Idaho	Missoula	ESPN 2
Oct. 4	6 p.m.	Idaho State	Pocatello, Idaho	Scripps Sports
Oct. 11	2 p.m.	Cal Poly	Missoula	Scripps Sports
Oct. 18	1 p.m.	Sacred Heart	Missoula	Scripps Sports
Oct. 24	8:30 p.m.	Sac. State	Sacramento, Calif.	ESPN 2
Nov. 1	1 p.m.	Weber State	Ogden, Utah	Scripps Sports
Nov. 8	1 p.m.	E. Washington	Missoula	Scripps Sports
Nov. 15	3 p.m.	Portland State	Portland, Ore.	Scripps Sports
Nov. 22	Noon	Montana State	Missoula	Scripps Sports



SHANNA MADISON, MISSOULIAN

STATS PERFORM FCS PRESEASON TOP 25 POLL

First-place votes in parenthesis

Ranking	Team	Points
1.	North Dakota State	1,398 (54)
2.	Montana State	1,335 (1)
3.	South Dakota State	1,266
4.	South Dakota	1,227 (1)
5.	UIW	1,138
6.	Illinois State	1,015
7.	Montana	1,004
8.	UC Davis	938
9.	Rhode Island	928
10.	Tarleton State	912
11.	Mercer	824
12.	Idaho	747
13.	Villanova	737
14.	Lehigh	493
15.	Sacramento State	492
16.	Abilene Christian	436
17.	Jackson State	336
18.	Western Carolina	335
19.	Northern Arizona	312
20.	Southern Illinois	310
21.	Tennessee Tech	284
22.	Monmouth	274
23.	Stephen F. Austin	183
24.	Stony Brook	181
25.	Richmond	154

Others receiving votes: Harvard, 139; Southeast Missouri, 127; Southern Utah, 123; UT Martin, 92; North Dakota, 88; Eastern Kentucky, 80; Chattanooga, 69; ETSU, 68; South Carolina State, 35; New Hampshire, 22; Tennessee State, 21; Southeastern Louisiana, 19; North Carolina Central, 18; Youngstown State, 16; Duquesne, 2.

AFCA FCS COACHES PRESEASON TOP 25 POLL

First-place votes in parenthesis

Ranking	Team	Points
1.	North Dakota St.	650 (26)
2.	Montana St.	612
3.	South Dakota St.	581
4.	UIW	541
5.	South Dakota	521
6.	Illinois St.	466
7.	UC Davis	456
8.	Tarleton St.	454
9.	Montana	447
10.	Rhode Island	416
11.	Mercer	396
12.	Idaho	371
13.	Villanova	338
14.	Sacramento St.	265
15.	Lehigh	207
16.	ACU	203
17.	Jackson St.	200
18.	Northern Arizona	168
19.	Western Carolina	147
20.	Southern Illinois	132
21.	Monmouth	116
22.	Richmond	111
22.	Tennessee Tech	111
24.	Stephen F. Austin	82
25.	Stony Brook	69

Others Receiving Votes: UT Martin, 50; Harvard, 40; Southeastern Louisiana, 36; South Carolina St., 25; Southeast Missouri St., 25; East Tennessee St., 24; New Hampshire, 21; Eastern Kentucky, 19; North Dakota, 19; Youngstown St., 16; Chattanooga, 14; Tennessee St., 14; Dartmouth, 13; North Carolina Central, 13; Central Connecticut St., 11; Southern Utah, 9; Lafayette, 6; Central Arkansas, 5; Northern Iowa, 5;

San Diego, 5; Indiana St., 4; Lindenwood, 4; Lamar, 3; Holy Cross, 2; Southern, 2; Yale, 2; Bucknell, 1; Eastern Washington, 1; Samford, 1.

BIG SKY PRESEASON COACHES POLL

First-place votes in parenthesis

Ranking	Team	Points
1.	Montana State	117 (7)
2.	UC Davis	100 (1)
3.	Montana	96 (2)
4.	Northern Arizona	94 (1)
5.	Idaho	81
6.	Sacramento State	73 (1)
7.	Idaho State	56
8.	Weber State	55
9.	Eastern Washington	48
10.	Portland State	32
11.	Cal Poly	25
12.	Northern Colorado	15

BIG SKY PRESEASON MEDIA POLL

First-place votes in parenthesis

Ranking	Team	Points
1.	Montana State	488 (30)
2.	Montana	434 (6)
3.	UC Davis	399 (4)
4.	Idaho	364 (1)
5.	Northern Arizona	354
6.	Sacramento State	282 (1)
7.	Idaho State	247
8.	Eastern Washington	225
9.	Weber State	192
10.	Portland State	140
11.	Cal Poly	94
12.	Northern Colorado	57

Schedule

From page 3

8. The game against Sac State is taking place on a Friday. It'll be the Grizzlies' first Friday game since Dec. 8, 2023, in the FCS quarterfinals against Furman in Missoula. It'll be their first Friday game on the road since Dec. 10, 2021, in the quarterfinals against James Madison in Harrisonburg, Virginia. It'll be their first non-Saturday regular season game since Thursday, Aug. 29, 2002, when they scored a 21-0 win over Hofstra in Hempstead, New York, as they began defense of their 2001 FCS championship. And it'll be their first non-Saturday conference game since Thursday, Sept. 28, 1989, at Idaho, a 30-24 loss.

9. The Griz will look to end two long road losing streaks. The last time they beat Weber State in Ogden, Utah, was 2012. The last time they defeated Sac State in Sacramento, California, was 2013. They lost their previous trip to Weber and Sac, both in 2022, as quarterback Lucas Johnson was knocked out on a targeting hit against the Hornets and missed the game against the Wildcats. Those are currently the two longest droughts for the Griz against Big Sky foes. They hadn't beaten Eastern Washington in Cheney, Washington, since 2008 before they snapped that skid in 2024. They host EWU on Nov. 8.

10. Montana will be playing Portland State at Providence Park in Portland, Oregon, on Nov. 15. It'll be the Vikings' first game at the downtown stadium since Oct. 13, 2018, and their only game there this season. Portland State used to play its home games at Providence Park from 1967-2018 before moving to Hillsboro, a suburb of Portland. The Vikings also played at Hillsboro Stadium in 2000 and 2010 because of ongoing renovations at Providence Park. The downtown stadium is home to a pair of professional soccer teams: the Portland Timbers of the MLS and the Portland Thorns of the NWSL.

11. The 124th Brawl of the Wild is Nov. 22 in Missoula. The home team has emerged victorious by a lopsided margin in each of the past five matchups dating back to Montana State's 2019 win in Bozeman. The last time a road team won came in 2018, when the Cats erased a 22-0 deficit and forced a goal line fumble in the final minute to escape with a 29-25 victory in a winner-makes-the-playoff battle in Hauck's first year back leading his alma mater. When the Brawl was last at UM in 2023, it was the first time ever the winner of the rivalry game would win the outright Big Sky title based on the outcome.



BEN ALLAN SMITH PHOTOS, MISSOULIAN

The Montana cheer squad flies the Griz flags during the FCS semifinal playoff game between Montana and NDSU at Washington-Grizzly Stadium in Missoula on Dec. 16, 2023. The Grizzlies will play eight regular season home games for the first time.

12. Montana heads into the season with three nationally ranked opponents on its schedule. The Griz were ranked No. 7 themselves in the Stats Perform FCS Preseason Top 25 Poll. They'll host No. 2 Montana State and No. 12 Idaho, and will travel to No. 15 Sacramento State. They'll also welcome in North Dakota, which was in the "others receiving votes" category and would've been No. 30 if the poll extended that deep. Indiana State and Eastern Washington, which both play at UM, weren't in the media poll but appeared in the AFCA FCS Preseason Coaches Poll toward the end of the "others receiving votes" section.

Bonus: As much as the schedule is about who a team plays, it is also about who a team misses as the unbalanced Big Sky slate rotates each year. The Griz don't play contenders UC Davis, which beat UM at Wa-Griz last year, and Northern Arizona, which put a scare into the Griz in Missoula last year despite missing its starting quarterback. The Aggies were ranked No. 8 in



BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

Fireworks go off before kickoff of the Big Sky Conference football game between Montana and UC Davis at Washington-Grizzly Stadium in Missoula on Nov. 9, 2024. The Grizzlies will play four night games, including two on national television, this season.

the Stats Top 25 and the Lumberjacks were No. 19 as the Big Sky had a conference-high six teams ranked. The Griz will also

miss Northern Colorado, a team they've shut out in each of their past three meetings going back to 2021.

Roster

From Page 2

14. Of the 29 transfers, 14 joined Montana after most recently being at the FBS level. The Griz also got six FCS transfers, three from NCAA Division II, five from junior college and one from the NAIA.

15. In addition to the 29 new transfers, Montana has 13 players who transferred in a previous year. That gives the Griz a total of 42 transfers compared to 66 players signed out of high school or prep school.

16. Receiver Blake Bohannon (Kennesaw State) and safety Micah Harper (BYU) are the only FBS transfers who have starting experience. Linebacker Solomon Tuliaupupu (USC) and OL Patrick Matan (NC State) have 20-plus games of backup experience. Nose tackle Braydon Bailey (Utah State) and QB Jake Jensen (USC) were FBS reserves but started in junior college. The other eight FBS transfers had minimal or no D-I experience on offense or defense.

17. Three of the six FCS transfers won awards. Returner/WR Michael Wortham (Eastern Washington) was an All-American all-purpose player. Linebacker Peyton Wing (Portland State) was an All-Big Sky honoree. Linebacker Elijahah Tolbert (Eastern Illinois) was an All-OVC/Big South pick. Tight end Josh Gale (UC Davis) has also had extensive experience, producing across 40 games. Cornerback Diezel Wilkinson (Idaho) contributed as a true freshman last year.

18. From the D-II level, safety Fynn Ridgeway of Whitefish had been Minnesota State-Moorhead's leading rusher as a running back. Senior cornerback Justus Breston started at UMary. Senior defensive lineman Derek Moreland played all season at Northwestern Oklahoma State.

19. Among the JUCO transfers, cornerback Rashid Mansour was an All-American at Reedley College. Safety Terahiti Wolf from Golden West College and DT Ze-kiel Seumalo from Allan Hancock College earned all-conference honors. Offensive lineman Carter Bowen from Butler Community College and OL Giovanni Pifferini from Fresno City College also saw regular playing time.

20. UM's lone NAIA transfer is defensive lineman Hunter Peck, who was the Frontier Conference defensive MVP last year. Peck and Wortham are the two transfers who expected to be out of eligibility last year



SHANNA MADISON, MISSOULIAN

The Grizzlies run drills during football practice at the University of Montana on Aug. 25 in Missoula. They have to replace all their regular defensive starters from the 2024 season.

before a one-year extension was given to players who started college at a non-NCAA school.

21. The Griz signed 23 recruits from high school or prep school, bringing in six in-state players and 17 from outside Montana. Nine of them are rated as 3-star prospects, per 247Sports: WR Jammel Ward of Texas, TE Malaki Davis of Washington, LB Colton Lentz of Washington, CB Sage Salopek of Washington, safeties Brady Beaner and Brock Beaner of Washington; and O-linemen Kaikoa Kanakaole of Hawaii, and Lincoln Hoefler and Quinlan Hyatt of Washington.

22. Five recruits are ranked as two-star prospects: RB Chase Cook of Red Lodge, WR Bridger Smith of Kalispell, OL Ezra Meyer of Missoula, LB Bridger Salvold of Culbertson and DL Logan Knaevelsrud of Washington.

23. Of the 58 departures, 22 players were seniors who exhausted their eligibility. Nearly all 22 were starters or regular contributors. That group was headlined by current NFL receiver/returner Junior Bergen and current CFL receiver Keelan White. Defensive end Hayden Harris had a brief shot in the NFL and could still play in the CFL after being drafted there. Running back Nick Ostmo and offensive lineman Brandon Casey had NFL minicamp invites.

24. Of the 58 departures, the other 36 players left with eligibility remaining. Of

All-Big Sky linebacker Riley Wilson went to Arizona. Quarterback Logan Fife moved to New Mexico State. Wide receiver Sawyer Racanelli landed at Wake Forest. Cornerback Ronald Jackson went to Old Dominion and then moved to Ohio. Kicker Grant Glasgow signed with New Mexico.

25. Of that group of 36 departures who had eligibility left, 23 players either retired from football early or didn't land with another team in the transfer process. Just five of the 23 were starters or regular contributors: offensive lineman Journey Grimsrud, safeties Jace Kluczewich and Tyson Rostad, and defensive ends Hank Nuce and Noah Kaschmitter. Rostad would've been a junior in 2025 and the other four would've been seniors.

Bonus: Montana's 108 players hail from 22 states: 32 from Montana, 21 from Washington, 12 from California, seven from Texas, six from Hawaii, four from Georgia, three apiece from Arizona, Minnesota and Oregon; two each from Colorado, Florida, Ohio and Utah; and one apiece from Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maryland, Michigan, North Carolina and Wyoming.

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