

DRAKE AT MONTANA • KICKOFF: 1 P.M. • TV: MTN • THURSDAY, SEPT. 3, 2026

GRIZZLY GAME DAY

Missoulian

WING THE WARRIOR

Peyton Wing
has learned
to soar

BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

Q&A WITH SAFETY BRAEDEN ORLANDI, PAGE 3 • SPELTZ PICKS THE BIG SKY, PAGE 4 • ROSTERS, PAGE 5

EARNING HIS WINGS

Overlooked early,
Wing takes flight as
All-America LB

FRANK GOGOLA
406 MT Sports

Peyton Wing's long hair flows out underneath his helmet as he roams the football field, providing punishing hits for the Montana football team.

He has been growing out that hair for nearly eight years on a football journey in which he has gone from being under recruited out of high school to going through a coaching change every year of college to becoming an FCS All-America linebacker entering his final season, which continues with the Grizzlies hosting Drake at 1 p.m. Saturday in Washington-Grizzly Stadium.

One of his biggest mentors was Keith Ross, his head coach and linebackers coach all four years at Sumner High School in Washington. Ross' trademarks are his locks, now gray in color and about two feet long, he estimated. His linebackers one year decided to grow out their hair like him. Wing opted in when he began playing for Ross.

"It's a tradition, a rich culture, just like here," he said. "Coach Ross is like our shepherd. He takes care of us. He's a great mentor. As a freshman, you're like, alright, how do I fit in? How do I dive into this? I want to be fully bought in."

Wing has fully bought in to both football and growing out his hair. The latter was a big change from getting regular buzzcut haircuts before high school.

He and his parents went back and forth when he decided to take that path his freshman year. He hasn't cut off the long hair since that first year in high school, only making some trims here and there to keep it professional.

"It's something the linebackers at Sumner do and they em-



BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

Montana linebacker Peyton Wing celebrates after tackling Montana State running back Adam Jones during the FCS semifinal football game Dec. 20, 2025, at Bobcat Stadium in Bozeman. Wing earned All-Big Sky Conference first-team honors in 2025.

body that warrior mentality we talk about all the time," Ross said. "When I see him, I laugh because he's had it for 6 or 7 years. It fits his personality perfect. His mom's from Iceland, so I tell him he's an Icelandic warrior."

Wing had to trust the process, not only with the hair looking good one day as it grew out, but more so on the football field. "Trust the process" was the message that Ross preached when Wing entered his high school program.

Wing went from playing on the freshman team his first year to being a backup with minimal playing time on varsity as a sophomore. By

his junior season, which came in spring 2021 after COVID in fall 2020, he was named the conference MVP while playing both linebacker and running back.

"Coming into high school, you ain't got any muscle, you're just weak, you're like what the hell's going on?" Wing said. "I jump into coach Ross' program and he's like trust the process. You're scared of this guy. I don't know him. He's yelling at everyone, but it's his way of loving you."

Wing and Ross almost never crossed paths. His middle school didn't have a feeder high school, so he had the choice to attend Sumner or Auburn.

Sumner had a successful football program under Ross, a longtime coach who knew Wing's father, Barry. They were rivals in high school and college when Ross played at Enumclaw High School and Central Washington University while Barry played at Tye High School and Western Washington University.

Auburn had a different familiarity as Wing had played for boys basketball head coach Ryan Hansen from fourth through eighth grade at the Auburn Basketball Academy. He and one of Hansen's sons had even played on the same soccer team, the sport Wing's mother, Alex, played in

college at Western Washington.

"He's that junkyard dog, even when he was little," Hansen said. "Willing to do all the little things. Was a great defender. A great competitor. Was kind of like an undersized forward a little bit but made up for his lack of height by his intelligence and making the right plays and his competitiveness. He's always been a pretty strong kid. His athleticism, his instincts, his timing. He's such an intelligent athlete that he always found himself in the right position."

Wing had been part of a large friend group that played basketball, and most of them went on to win the program's first state title at Auburn their senior season. Hansen is certain Wing would've been a four-year player in the program and an impact player on the championship team had he joined.

However, he didn't see Wing as a future college basketball player. Wing had long been more enthralled with football since he started playing the flag version growing up. It amped up more when he got into tackle football.

His parents held him out of playing tackle football until seventh grade. Barry, a former outside linebacker, saw the delayed entry as a way to keep the wear and tear off Peyton's body and wait until it was easier to learn to tackle.

"That really built a fire," Peyton said. "They held me out of this thing that I wanted to do so bad, and it's just like, if I could go back now and see myself and tell myself, it's fine, just wait, trust the process, like Coach Ross said. I wish I would hammer that. I had such a passion for it and I still do."

His passion and performance showed with his MVP award in the South Puget Sound League, which Ross called the best conference in the state, while playing in Class 4A, the largest classification in the state.

Orlandi debuts on strong note

Carroll transfer safety is leading tackler in opener

FRANK GOGOLA
406 MT Sports

Safety Braeden Orlandi had already been inside Washington-Grizzly Stadium before he played in the season opener last week.

He was there for the Montana football team's games against North Dakota, South Dakota State and South Dakota to watch his former Carroll College teammate, defensive end Hunter Peck, star for the Grizzlies.

Orlandi made the same move from the NAIA to NCAA Division I this past offseason and will try to replicate the success that Peck experienced in earning All-Big Sky Conference first-team honors during his lone season at UM.

In the season opener, Orlandi totaled a game-high eight tackles and 0.5 tackles for loss. He and the Griz will return to the field for a nonconference game against Drake at 1 p.m. Saturday in Washington-Grizzly Stadium.

Orlandi sat down with 406 MT Sports to talk about his move to Montana. This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.

Q: What has it been like practicing and playing in this stadium on the field and no longer being in the stands?

A: I've kind of become accustomed to it. It feels like home now. It doesn't feel like foreign territory anymore. This place is home now. This place is still breathtaking. It always is. This is home now. It's time to defend the home field, so I'm excited.

Q: Being from California, how did you end up at Carroll and why did you want to stay in Montana when you were looking to transfer?



Montana safety Braeden Orlandi (16) runs toward the bench during the college football game against Southern Utah on Aug. 29 at Washington-Grizzly Stadium in Missoula. Orlandi led the Grizzlies with eight tackles in the season opener.

SHANNA MADISON, MISSOULIAN

A: It was just by happenstance. I couldn't be more thankful because it brought me here, and it brought me so many connections that I'll carry with me for the rest of my life. This place is awesome. That's why I didn't leave the state of Montana. I could've gone to a variety of places, but I knew in the back of my mind this is the place where I wanted to be.

Q: After playing with Hunter and seeing him be a first-team player here, what does that do for what you think your potential could be?

A: It shows it's possible. It shows it doesn't matter what level you play at. I tell myself all the time it's just football. Just keeping it simple. Hunter's one of a kind, and so, he did it and he kind of paved a way for me.

Q: What are the biggest differences between NAIA and Division I?

A: It's kind of night and day. I think the only similarity is you're playing with a football. There's so many to name. It's just little things. We have a great nutrition staff with Shelby. After a hard lift,

you have a shake waiting for you, so it's just little things like that. Just all the accessories that come with playing at the Division I level. I'm super, super thankful for it. At the same time, Carroll was a great spot for me. When I was there, I had zero complaints. When you make the transition, you notice all the little, intricate things that kind of pile up, just from rehab to nutrition bar, all the different people we have on the staff. Everyone does a great job here.

Q: How about differences in speed on the field and with the playbook?

A: The playbook's obviously different from what I ran at Carroll. Just from the front, different everything. But the speed of the game, I think it's really helped me out that I've played a lot of football, and so when I come and step out here, it's not like it's foreign territory. It's not like the game's sped up. It honestly isn't. It feels like I'm right at home. So that's super comfortable for me, and I'm glad that I've got to experience a lot of football at the NAIA level because I feel like it prepared me for this moment. I'm just playing football.

Please see **ORLANDI**, Page 7

HOW WE SEE THE BIG SKY

BILL SPELTZ
406 MT Sports

Resist the temptation to overthink Saturday night's home opener for the Montana football team.

Certainly the third-ranked Grizzlies have a lot of work to do if they hope to catch the top-ranked Montana State Bobcats this season. But both teams share the same 1-0 record and that's most important at this point.



**BILL
SPELTZ**

6-1



**CARSON
CASHION**

6-1



**FRANK
GOGOLA**

5-2



**VICTOR
FLORES**

5-2

chance to work on weaknesses. So far UM has the same problems on offense as last year: Inconsistency and an inability to put teams away. One minute Montana looks unstoppable, the next it can't string together first downs.

The Grizzlies' performance against SUU

doesn't make me very confident they can pull the upset on Sept. 19 at FBS Oregon State. But there's a lot of time between now and then to improve.

Here's a look at this weekend's Big Sky Conference games:

SATURDAY

Drake (0-1) at No. 3 Montana (1-0), 1 p.m. TV: The Spot-MTN via Scripps Sports and ESPN+. Drake lost at home last week to NCAA Division II South Dakota Mines, 38-35. The Grizzlies will undoubtedly go into Saturday's game as a heavy favorite. Montana's passing attack should show marked improvement in efficiency. The Montana defense will be tested, perhaps, but I expect that group to be more effective in both halves this week. Growing up in Iowa, which is the home of the Bulldogs, I always think of the Drake Relays when the subject of Drake University is introduced. Track and field fans may remember those relays were so important 50 years ago that ABC used to air them on "Wide World of Sports." Back in 1994, I was there to cover it when Carl Lewis famously helped to shovel snow off his lane before winning the 100-meter dash under snowy conditions. It's fun reminiscing about that freezing-cold spring day but the point I'm making here is that I think about track and field when I think about Drake, not the Bulldogs' non-scholarship football program. **Bill Speltz:** Griz 56, Bulldogs 17. **Frank Gogola:** Griz 55, Drake 14. **Victor Flores:** Griz 41, Drake 7. **Carson Cashion:** Montana 66, Drake 10.

Butler (1-0) at No. 1 Montana State (1-0), 6:30 p.m. TV: CBS and ESPN+. The Butler may have done it in one or two of those old murder mystery novels you've read, but Butler won't do it in Bozeman. Three FCS teams impressed the heck out of me in their season openers last weekend: Montana State, South Dakota State and Illinois State. They're ranked 1, 2 and 4 this week, with the Jackrabbits supplanting Montana in the No. 2 spot. As for the Cats, they looked fast in a blowout win at Utah Tech. Fast on offense, defense and special teams. Butler trailed Division II Georgetown College (Kentucky) late in the third quarter before rallying for a 27-23 win last weekend. This weekend the Bulldogs will fall behind early and struggle to keep the game close. **Speltz:** Cats 60, Dogs 6. **Gogola:** Cats 56, Butler 6. **Flores:** Cats 52, Butler 3. **Cashion:** Montana State 48, Butler 6.

Northern Iowa (0-0) at Eastern Washington (0-1), 5 p.m. TV: ESPN+. The Eagles delivered a strong performance in defeat last weekend, dropping a 34-27 decision at 22nd-ranked Northern Arizona. Eastern led 24-20 early in

the fourth quarter before fizzling. Any time a team fizzles in Flagstaff, I always wonder if the elevation (6,880 feet) and the warm conditions in the Walkup Skydome played a factor. At any rate, the Eagles are back at home on the red turf this week and the Panthers will be at a disadvantage since they do not have a game under their belt and they're used to playing their games in the UNI-Dome. **Speltz:** Eagles 30, Panthers 27. **Gogola:** Eagles 31, Northern Iowa 21. **Flores:** EWU 24, UNI 20. **Cashion:** Eastern Washington 35, Northern Iowa 17. **No. 23 Idaho State (1-0) at FBS Utah State (0-0), 5 p.m. TV: ESPN+.** For the first time since 2018, the Bengals are ranked nationally this week. Griz fans might say they saw it coming after Idaho State put a scare into Montana last season in Pocatello. The Bengals buried VMI in their home debut, 38-10. VMI was held scoreless until midway through the fourth quarter. ISU quarterback Jordan Cooke was 18 for 29 passing for 325 yards and four touchdowns. Utah State was 6-7 last season but did have wins over Fresno State and Air Force. As much as I'd like to pick the Bengals for an upset, it seems unwise against an Aggies team sky-high for its home debut. **Speltz:** Aggies 27, Bengals 20. **Gogola:** Idaho State 35, Utah State 34. **Flores:** Utah State 35, Idaho State 31. **Cashion:** Utah State 28, Idaho State 24. **Central Washington (0-0) at Cal Poly (1-0), 6 p.m. TV: ESPN+.** What a thrilling win it was for the Mustangs in their home opener against Idaho last Friday. Quarterback Anthony Grigsby, Jr. found wide receiver Tayvion McCoy for his fourth touchdown pass with 9 seconds remaining in a 38-34 victory. The Mustangs will keep it going this week, but it won't be easy against a Central Washington team coming off a 10-2 season. **Speltz:** Mustangs 38, Wildcats 28. **Gogola:** Cal Poly 45, CWU 17. **Flores:** Cal Poly 42, CWU 14. **Cashion:** Cal Poly 42, Central Washington 24. **Utah Tech (0-1) at FBS No. 14 BYU (0-0), 6 p.m. TV: ESPN+.** This matchup is a farce. The Trailblazers just got their doors blown off by Montana State in St. George last week. You want to know why I prefer the NFL over college football, generally speaking? Matchups like this one. **Speltz:** Cougars 73, Trailblazers 0. **Gogola:** BYU 63, Utah Tech 0. **Flores:** BYU 56, Utah Tech 7. **Cashion:** BYU 77, Utah Tech 7.

Weber State (1-0) at Southern Utah (0-1), 6 p.m. TV: ESPN+. This might be the toughest game to pick this week. The Wildcats started the Eric Kjar coaching era in thrilling fashion last Friday. Weber State blocked an extra point with 3 seconds left that sealed a 30-29 win at Northern Colorado. Weber led by 10 points twice in the second half before

Northern Colorado rallied in the fourth quarter. Still, I'm picking the Thunderbirds in this one, in part because I was impressed with the second-half effort of their QB last Saturday in a 28-21 loss to Montana. **Speltz:** Thunderbirds 30, Wildcats 28. **Gogola:** Southern Utah 35, Weber State 24. **Flores:** SUU 28, Weber 20. **Cashion:** Southern Utah 24, Weber State 14. **No. 11 South Dakota (1-0) at Northern Colorado (0-1), 6 p.m. TV: ESPN+.** The Coyotes are coming off a 59-20 win over Central Connecticut State. Look for USD to pile up the points again this week in Greeley, Colorado. **Speltz:** Coyotes 42, Bears 28. **Gogola:** South Dakota 42, Northern Colorado 21. **Flores:** South Dakota 34, UNC 17. **Cashion:** South Dakota 42, Northern Colorado 20.

No. 22 Northern Arizona (1-0) at FBS Arizona (0-0), 6:30 p.m. TV: ESPN+. The Wildcats went 9-4 last season and beat archrival Arizona State in late November, 23-7. They will be sky-high for their home opener against the Lumberjacks. **Speltz:** Wildcats 37, Lumberjacks 17. **Gogola:** Arizona 41, NAU 16. **Flores:** Arizona 48, NAU 13. **Cashion:** Arizona 38, Northern Arizona 20.

Portland State (0-1) at FBS San Diego State (0-0), 7:30 p.m. TV: USA. The Vikings had Big Sky Conference fans buzzing for a little while Saturday when they raced to a 21-0 halftime lead at home against seventh-ranked UC Davis. Portland State fizzled in the second half in a 31-24 loss and the Viks will have their hands full against an Aztecs team eager to make a good impression in their home opener. **Speltz:** Aztecs 40, Vikings 16. **Gogola:** SDSU 45, PSU 14. **Flores:** SDSU 49, PSU 7. **Cashion:** San Diego State 45, Portland State 13.

No. 7 UC Davis (1-0) at San Diego (0-0), 8 p.m. TV: ESPN+. The Aggies got a wakeup call in their opener at Portland State, spotting the hosts a three-touchdown lead before outscoring them 31-3 in the second half. This week the Aggies could have just as much trouble if they start the same way against the nonscholarship Toreros. But that won't happen. **Speltz:** Aggies 35, Toreros 21. **Gogola:** Davis 48, San Diego 17. **Flores:** Davis 45, San Diego 7. **Cashion:** UC Davis 31, San Diego 14.

THURSDAY NIGHT GAME

Idaho (0-1) at FBS No. 21 Utah (0-0), 7 p.m. TV: ESPN. The Vandals are probably still smarting from losing on the road to Cal Poly in a thriller last Friday. Not that it matters this week against a Utah team that went 11-2 last season and will be fresh as a daisy Thursday night. **Speltz:** Utes 56, Vandals 14. **Gogola:** Utah 48, Idaho 14. **Flores:** Utah 45, Idaho 10. **Cashion:** Utah 59, Idaho 17.

No.	Name	Year	Position	Height	Weight	Hometown	21	Ashton Paine	Sr.	DB	6-1	193	Tumwater, Wash.	60	Wyatt Sandford	5th	OL	6-4	298	Coeur d'Alene, Idaho
0	Monte Gillman	Jr.	RB	5-8	167	Dassel, Minn.	21	Courtney Rogers	Fr.	RB	6-2	211	Blytheville, Ark.	61	Lincoln Hoefler	So.	OL	6-6	306	Everson, Wash.
0	Gabe Stroud	Jr.	CB	5-11	185	Tyler, Texas	23	Dane Kellner	Fr.	S	5-11	170	Honolulu, Hawaii	62	Lincoln Senter	Fr.	OL	6-5	240	Great Falls, Mont.
2	Hunter Haines	Jr.	S	6-2	212	West Linn, Ore.	23	Dylan Paine	Gr.	RB	5-9	198	Tumwater, Wash.	63	Kaikoa Kanakaole	So.	OL	6-5	295	Kapa'a, Hawaii
2	Landon Ransom-Goelz	Sr.	WR	6-1	188	Trophy Club, Texas	24	Justin Eklund	5th	LB	6-2	235	Rocklin, Calif.	64	Matt Hilden	Jr.	OL	6-6	304	Santa Rosa, Calif.
3	Brooks Davis	Jr.	WR	6-0	180	Brentwood, Calif.	25	Brady Beaner	So.	S	6-0	191	Anacortes, Wash.	65	Dylan Jemtegaard	Gr.	OL	6-4	296	Yelm, Wash.
3	Jeilani Davis	Jr.	CB	6-0	201	Inglewood, Calif.	26	Chase Cook	So.	RB	5-11	197	Red Lodge, Mont.	66	Ezra Meyer	So.	OL	6-5	292	Missoula, Mont.
4	Luke Flowers	Jr.	QB	6-1	191	Rigby, Idaho	27	Nohi Casco	Fr.	CB	5-11	195	Lahaina, Hawaii	68	Torin Jeske	Jr.	OL	6-6	295	Bozeman, Mont.
4	Dane Parker	Jr.	S	6-1	180	Puyallup, Wash.	28	Hashim Jones	So.	RB	6-0	200	Hartford, Conn.	69	Trevor Steinbach	Jr.	OL	6-5	300	Sammamish, Wash.
5	Ian Finch	5th	WR	6-3	210	Missoula, Mont.	29	Tanner Huff	Gr.	S	6-0	208	Butte, Mont.	70	Josiah West	Fr.	OL	6-6	317	Prosser, Wash.
5	Hudson Schrader	Fr.	S	6-2	194	Los Gatos, Calif.	30	Kade Cutler	5th	S	6-0	207	Phillipsburg, Mont.	71	Quinlan Hyatt	So.	OL	6-7	295	Spokane, Wash.
6	Chris Johnson II	Jr.	CB	6-1	190	Fort Worth, Texas	31	Tanner Williams	Jr.	LB	6-1	218	Orange, Calif.	72	Jack D'Ambra	Gr.	OL	6-3	303	Wildomar, Calif.
6	Legend Lyons	So.	WR	6-2	185	Covina, Calif.	32	Peyton Wing	5th	LB	6-0	225	Sumner, Wash.	74	Owen Liehti	Fr.	OL	6-7	250	Ankeny, Iowa
7	Weston Adams	5th	WR	5-11	192	Shell, Wyo.	33	Taylor Jones	So.	LB	6-1	210	Missoula, Mont.	75	Dyllan Drummond	Jr.	OL	6-4	315	Tyler, Texas
7	Kash Goicoechea	Jr.	S	6-1	199	Kalispell, Mont.	34	Parker Link	Fr.	S	5-10	191	Missoula, Mont.	76	Campbell Vandiver	Sr.	OT	6-8	285	Nashville, Tenn.
8	Keali'i Ah Yat	Sr.	QB	6-1	210	Kaneohe, Hawaii	35	Cooper Neer	Fr.	LB	6-3	202	Kennewick, Wash.	77	Carter Bowen	Sr.	OL	6-7	305	Dawson, Minn.
8	Adama Fall	Gr.	S	6-3	210	Dakar, Senegal	36	Garrett Speer	Jr.	DB	6-0	195	Sherwood, Ore.	78	Lucas Freitas	Sr.	OL	6-6	310	Snoqualmie, Wash.
9	Jordan Dever	Sr.	WR	6-0	175	Spokane, Wash.	37	Clay Owen	Sr.	LB	6-2	225	Billings, Mont.	80	Malaki Davis	Fr.	TE	6-5	230	Tacoma, Wash.
9	Kougar Kappel	Fr.	S	6-0	178	Red Lodge, Mont.	38	Nai Mose	5th	LB	6-0	225	Euless, Texas	81	Mariano Birdno	Jr.	TE	6-5	255	Flagstaff, Ariz.
10	Eli Gillman	5th	RB	6-0	215	Dassel, Minn.	39	Fynn Ridgeway	Sr.	RB	6-1	208	Whitefish, Mont.	82	Merek Fisher	Fr.	TE	6-6	238	Billings, Mont.
10	Styles Goodman	So.	LB	6-2	230	Austin, Texas	40	Colton Lentz	So.	LB	6-3	223	Nooksack, Wash.	83	Dawson Hammond	Fr.	WR	6-0	176	Malta, Mont.
11	Cameron Gurnsey	Sr.	WR	6-1	195	Butte, Mont.	41	Ryder Barinowski	Jr.	K	6-0	203	Whitefish, Mont.	84	Grady Walker	Jr.	TE	6-4	235	Missoula, Mont.
11	Jayden Nicholas	Fr.	CB	6-0	168	Concord, Calif.	42	Giovanni Pifferini	Sr.	DL	6-4	230	Placerville, Calif.	85	Wesley Ehret	Fr.	WR	6-2	190	Belgrade, Mont.
12	Elijah Brady	Sr.	CB	6-1	176	Seattle, Wash.	43	Cooper Cyphers	Fr.	DL	6-2	253	Fort Worth, Texas	86	William Snell	Fr.	WR	6-4	189	Billings, Mont.
12	Gage Sliter	Sr.	QB	6-1	199	Kalispell, Mont.	44	Titus Rohrer	5th	TE	6-7	235	Bryan, Ohio	87	Everett O'Donnell	Jr.	P	6-2	199	Melbourne, Aus.
13	Brock Beaner	So.	S	6-0	202	Anacortes, Wash.	45	Wyatt Red												

No.	Name	Year	Position	Height	Weight	Hometown	22	Derrick Bunkelman	Jr.	LB	5-11	225	De Pere, Wis.	57	Hadley Holmes	Jr.	DL	6-2	265	Overland Park, Kan.
0	Judah Mallette	Jr.	WR	6-2	195	Chicago, Ill.	22	Kavanaugh Clark	R-So.	RB	5-9	185	Glendale, Ariz.	58	Jackson Davis	Fr.	DL	6-6	215	Waukee, Iowa
1	Garrison Codde	Jr.	DB	5-11	175	Verona, Wis.	23	Carson Green	Jr.	RB	5-9	195	San Antonio, Texas	59	Aiden Hennings	Fr.	DL	6-2	230	New Lenox, Ill.
2	Riley Warzynski	Gr.	QB	6-3	215	Stevens Point, Wis.	23	Karson Kindred	So.	DB	5-8	175	Villa Rica, Ga.	60	Parker Matiyow	Sr.	OL	6-3	290	Council Bluffs, Iowa
2	Riley Contreras	Fr.	DB	6-0	200	Hinsdale, Ill.	24	Jack Ward	Sr.	LB	6-3	240	Houston, Texas	61	A. Voloder-Munoz	Jr.	OL	6-4	295	Itasca, Ill.
2	Jakob Skau	So.	WR	5-11	180	Urbandale, Iowa	25	Maksym Makota	So.	DB	5-10	185	Des Plaines, Ill.	62	Dustin Disney	Jr.	OL	6-2	280	Santa Clarita, Calif.
3	Kyle Cottee	So.	QB	6-4	210	Terre Haute, Ind.	25	Marquis Monroe	Jr.	RB	5-8	185	Chino, Calif.	63	Brandon Maxwell	Jr.	OL	6-2	300	Winterset, Iowa
3	Taye Proctor	Jr.	DB	6-0	195	Johnston, Iowa	26	Louden Huisenga	So.	LB	6-3	205	Wayland, Iowa	64	Joe Mausser	Fr.	OL	6-1	255	West Des Moines, Iowa
4	Parker Olthoff	Gr.	TE	6-2	225	Irvine, Calif.	27	Payton Aukland	So.	DB	5-10	180	Elizabeth, Colo.	65	Tequan Kemp	Jr.	DL	6-2	285	Augusta, Ga.
4	Chris Rice	Sr.	DB	6-4	210	Colorado Springs, Colo.	28	Porter Williams	So.	RB	5-9	190	Oviedo, Fla.	66	Ray Marshall	Jr.	OL	6-5	310	Pasadena, Calif.
5	Tommy Williams	Gr.	DB	6-0	195	Dubuque, Iowa	29	Drew Larson	Jr.	DB	6-1	195	Iowa City, Iowa	67	Declan Gill	Fr.	OL	6-3	280	Chicago, Ill.
5	Shakur Wright	Jr.	RB	6-4	215	Waterloo, Iowa	30	Kyle Hogan	Fr.	RB	5-10	190	St. Louis, Mo.	68	Ryker Henderson	Fr.	OL	6-4	250	Delmar, Iowa
6	Donovan Collins	Fr.	DB	5-11	175	Syracuse, N.Y.	31	Nicholas Humphries	So.	DB	5-11	175	Wexford, Pa.	69	Lincoln Oltmann	Fr.	OL	6-3	260	Cedar Rapids, Iowa
6	Walker Tart	Sr.	WR	6-1	195	Dubuque, Iowa	31	Kael Williams	Fr.	RB	6-0	185	Washington, Iowa	72	Will Kowalewski	So.	OL	6-8	325	Grand Rapids, Mich.
7	J.R. Flood	Gr.	LB	6-0	230	Northbrook, Ill.	32	Chase Lamb	Jr.	DL	6-2	250	Urbandale, Iowa	73	Tyler Tortorich	Sr.	OL	6-2	290	Plainfield, Ill.
7	Braylon Wilson	Fr.	QB	6-3	205	Reno, Nev.	33	Ken Tilford	Sr.	DB	5-11	195	Vacaville, Calif.	74	Justin Newman	Sr.	OL	6-6	300	Morris, Ill.
8	Kellen Haverback	Fr.	QB	6-2	180	Mount Vernon, Ill.	34	Adrien Robbins	So.	RB	5-10	190	Prairie City, Iowa	75	Will Hendricks	Jr.	OL	6-3	320	Lawrence, Kan.
8	Skylar James	Gr.	LB	5-11	215	Des Moines, Iowa	35	Zion Ward	Jr.	DB	5-7	170	Chicago, Ill.	76	Jackson Reasoner	Jr.	OL	6-4	305	Third Lake, Ill.
9	Cody Blicharz	So.	RB	5-10	190	Mazomanie, Wis.	36	Brody Shuss	So.	DB	6-2	210	Elizabeth, Colo.	77	Drew Heiss	Sr.	OL	6-4	305	Arlington Heights, Ill.
9	Dax Wiskur	Fr.	DB	6-2	200	Sedalia, Mo.	36	Luke Thompson	So.	RB	5-10	205	Sanger, Texas	78	Ian Bickert	So.	OL	6-1	285	Tipp City, Ohio
10	Christian Aguilar	Sr.	LB	6-1	225	Peoria, Ariz.	37	Zach Adamo	Jr.	DL	6-2	240	Elgin, Ill.	80	Lincoln DeLaere	So.	WR	5-11	195	Atlanta, Ga.
10	Mitchell January	Gr.	WR	6-0	200	Excelsior, Minn.	38	Andrew Eastman	So.	DB	5-11	190	Urbandale, Iowa	81	Mason Goering	Fr.	WR	6-4	185	Iowa City, Iowa
11	Lucci Fidone	Sr.	WR	5-7	175	Council Bluffs, Iowa	39	Ben Jameson	Sr.	K/P	6-1	225	Maple Grove, Minn.	82	Parker Tuno	Fr.	WR	6-2	190	Summersville, Mo.
11	Casey Midcap	So.	DB	6-2	195	Wray, Colo.	40	Jaylen Bender	Fr.	K	5-11	170	Lucasville, Ohio	83	Sam Bruno	So.	K	6-0	185	Sugar Grove, Ill.
12	Spencer Halvorson	Jr.	DB	6-2	215	Phoenix, Ariz.	40	Brady Fitz	Fr.	LB	6-1	210	Waukee, Iowa	83	Kobe Lewis	Fr.	WR	5-10	180	Marietta, Ga.
12	Sam Johnson	Jr.	WR	5-11	190	Waukee, Iowa	42	Jason Samis												

Wing

From 2

Wing was also rated as a 3-star prospect and the No. 35 player in the state of Washington for the Class of 2022, according to 247Sports. However, that equated into only two offers: one from a bottom-tier FCS program and one from an NAIA team.

His measurables weren't D-I level, Ross recalled hearing from recruiters. He knew they were wrong.

"1,000 years ago, Peyton Wing would have been the warrior king of some tribe," Ross said. "He's a true badass. He's tougher than anyone and wants it more than anyone. That's how he overcame his so-called shortcomings. A lot of people missed on him. I hope coaches learn you got to go with somebody who's a real football player."

Wing took that lone D-I offer to play at Portland State. Then-Vikings head coach Bruce Barnum knew the Wing name, having been an assistant coach at Western Washington when Wing's father, Barry, was first a player and then an assistant coach.

Wing had gotten interest from other D-I teams, but they backed off when he suffered ACL and meniscus injuries during his senior football season, Barry said. Ross thought Wing could excel as a college linebacker and even thought he'd make a good fullback.

"He's probably the toughest kid I've ever coached," Ross said. "He had that destruction mindset, hitting everybody and loved the contact. That's why he morphed into the linebacker he is."

Wing showed why he shouldn't have been overlooked. He earned All-Big Sky Conference second-team honors during his third season at Portland State. He ranked 10th in the league with 93 tackles and 15th with 7.5 tackles for loss.

That honor came even as the Vikings had their worst record in his time there at 3-8 overall and 3-5 in the Big Sky that season. They went 12-21 overall and 10-14 in conference over his three years.

"Some guys don't get recruited out of high school, and it's like, alright, what are you gonna do



BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

Montana linebacker Peyton Wing runs the ball into the end zone during the FCS quarterfinal football game against South Dakota on Dec. 13, 2025, at Washington-Grizzly Stadium in Missoula. Wing transferred to the Grizzlies from Portland State ahead of the 2025 season.

now?" Wing said. "Are you going to sit and pout, or are you going to make the best of what you got? It's all about your response to that, and I think I handled it pretty well. Yeah, I would like to get recruited to big schools, but I think my route was amazing"

He hit the transfer portal following the 2024 season and experienced a new sensation in recruiting: being wanted. Montana offered, as did Missouri Valley Football Conference team North Dakota and FBS team Kent State.

Montana offered him first in the portal. He had hoped they

would want him. He had liked what he saw when he showed out against the Grizzlies while playing in Washington-Grizzly Stadium during a 2024 game with the Vikings.

"It was rough for him because he's a loyal kid to a point," Barry said. "He's used to winning and he wanted to have an impact. His decision to go in the portal was very tough for him because he still has a ton of friends on the team. Coach Barnum, he liked, and the assistants. It was he wanted to pursue something and knew he only had two more years."

"He's tougher than anyone and wants it more than anyone.

That's how he overcame his so-called shortcomings.

A lot of people missed on him. I hope coaches learn you got to go with somebody who's a real football player."

Keith Ross,

Wing's high school coach

Two more years and two more linebacker coaches for Wing. He has had a different linebacker coach in each of his five seasons in college. He has had a different defensive coordinator in four of his five years and has had six DCs total because he had co-DCs in three of his five seasons.

All the change has created an atmosphere of constant learning for Wing. There have been new defensive schemes, new play calls and new roles to learn while adapting to various coaching personalities and approaches. He eats it up.

"I love watching film and being critiqued," he said. "That's where you get better. That's a huge factor to keep me motivated. I always want to be the best version of myself."

He foresaw the ability to do that at Montana. He didn't hit the transfer portal in early January after just one season in Missoula in which he was named the Griz defensive MVP and an All-Big Sky first-team pick.

He didn't opt to leave after the departure of head coach Bobby Hauck in February, which opened up another portal window for Montana. His linebacker coach and both DCs later left too, but he stayed.

"I think I've really shown how adaptable I can be," he said. "When adversity hits, I feel like I've shown that I could be very resilient and keep pushing forward. College football, it's like you're walking through a blizzard, man."

Wing returned as the projected leader of the defense in the eyes of first-year head coach Bobby

Kennedy. He's one of only three returning defensive players who have started a game, two of whom were consistent starters.

New defensive coordinator Eric Sanders has him wearing the green dot helmet with the one-way communication system. It's the second year he's taking on that responsibility of communicating the defensive play to his teammates.

"He means everything to the defense because he's the person you want leading your defense," safety Braeden Orlandi said. "He attacks every day like it's life or death. That's how you need to attack practice. That's how you need to attack everything, a lift. He has the most juice out of anyone I've ever seen, and it's contagious."

Wing went into his final season on a Montana team ranked No. 2 in the nation in the FCS. The Grizzlies are coming off a 13-2 season in which they reached the semifinals of the FCS playoffs.

He's eager to attack this season with everything he has because he knows there's no such thing as pickup tackle football in his future. He's determined to prove himself again and not feel like he has arrived as a player.

"I'm just trying to soak everything up because I love this," he said. "I'm so grateful for this opportunity at the University of Montana. This is top of the line. I love it here. So it's pretty easy for me to stay motivated."

The focus is on the season, but he knows he'll be taking part in Pro Day in the spring after he's done suiting up for the Griz and studying business management. His goal is to prove he can play at the next level.

Whenever football ends, so too may the long hair that has made Wing easily identifiable to his parents, who have been in the stands for every home game.

"I bet it would be pretty emotional," he said. "It's been my look for 8 years now. So, it'll be a weird time. I'll feel a little lighter. I've got a lot of hair. Yeah, it'll be an interesting time."

Frank Gogola is the Senior Sports Reporter at the Missoulian and 406 MT Sports. Follow him on X @FrankGogola or email him at frank.gogola@406mtsports.com.

Orlandi

From Page 3

Q: Since getting here and starting to learn the defense, where do you feel you've grown the most?

A: Not even me but the whole group, I think we've all grown a lot in our communication because that's huge, especially in this stadium. You're not going to be able to hear 5 feet away from you on third downs. So, communication is huge. Just knowing where you're supposed to be in certain moments, things like that. I think as a group, collectively, we've all done a really good job in our communication. We worked a lot of that in the summer and over camp. Game week, it's really paid off for all of us.

Q: Why jersey number 16?

A: I wore 6 in high school; 6 was my number. Then when I got to Carroll, they didn't have 6, so I was looking for the closest number with 6 in it. Grabbed 16 and then it kind of stuck with me. Then when I got here, I had the chance to switch, and I was like, 16's done me right, I can't switch up on it. So I'm staying faithful to the 16 and riding it out for the rest of my college career.

Q: Missoula was voted the best college sports town in the U.S., what have you noticed in your time here as to why that is?

A: It lives up to it. It totally does. It should be number one. Just everything, just the people, the people is what makes this place so great. There's so many fans, family, friends from all over that support Griz football, and you feel the support from Montana Knife Company to our sponsors, our donors, everyone. You feel

loved here, you feel welcomed and that's what makes it great. Then if you look around at Washington-Grizzly Stadium, this is also what makes it great. It's the Mecca of the FCS and it carries that name for a reason.

Q: I read you were a league MVP basketball player in high school. So, was football always going to be your sport in college?

A: The whole time in the background I knew football was my thing. I just happened to be an athlete that I was really good at rebounding, playing defense and attacking the hoop. So, I carried that with a pride on my shoulders. All my best friends, we all play basketball together, so that's why I loved it so much. I was only 6-foot-1 playing the four spot. That's not going to get it done in college at all.

Q: So it's all about physicality for you, whether on the football field or basketball court?

A: In high school, we would finish football season and then that next week I'm playing basketball. Those first couple games, I'm fouling out every game because your body control on the basketball court is way different than on the football field. I definitely played basketball with a lot

of physicality, and I think that helped me in some ways but also got me a lot of foul trouble. That was kind of the brand for me on the team, being the physical guy that's going to do the dirty work. I think I attack the same way on the football field, just kind of getting my nose dirty and having fun with it.

Q: Have you gotten in any pickup games with teammates here?

A: Not yet. Just trying to focus on football here. It's all year round. So I'm just trying to keep my body right. I've played a game of PIG or something with the guys. I've done that a couple times, go put some shots up in our buddy's backyard. I'll pick up a basketball every now and then, put up some shots. The form's definitely broke.

Q: Who's the best guy on the team you've shot with?

A: The other day, I actually saw Eli (Gillman) cheffing up. It was actually crazy. I'm like, are you good at everything? Like, what is this? But Eli is pretty good. I can tell you the worst player is Styles Goodman. You see him shoot a basketball, it's like he hasn't touched a ball in his life. I'd probably say Eli, and Grady Walker is a pretty good basketball player.



BEN ALLAN SMITH, MISSOULIAN

Montana wide receiver Brooks Davis (3) dives for a catch while being defended by safety Braeden Orlandi (16) during the spring football game April 10 at Washington-Grizzly Stadium in Missoula. Orlandi transferred to the Grizzlies from Carroll College following the 2025 season.

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