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Grizzly skiers get first taste of action in Montana State Invitational

University of Montana--Missoula. Office of University Relations

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MISSOULA---

The University of Montana ski team, hampered by the loss of four top prospects because of grades, but potentially stronger than last year's squad anyway, travels to Bozeman this weekend to compete in the Montana State University Invitational Meet at Bridger Bowl.

The meet, which will run Saturday and Sunday after practice sessions on Friday, will feature teams from Montana State, the Air Force Academy, Idaho State, the University of Alberta, and Weber State, in addition to Montana.

Defending Big Sky Conference champion Montana State is expected to repeat its title this year, and should be considered the favorite at its own invitational this weekend.

Montana coach Gary Nelson, formerly an outstanding Grizzly skier, had counted on the extra depth the four skiers lost by low grades would provide.

"I think we will be stronger than last year anyway," Nelson said, "but the loss of those kids will certainly hurt us."

Nelson's skiers have been working hard to overcome falling problems they had last year, and the coach thinks they have made excellent progress in working out the problem.

Eight Grizzlies will make the trip to Bozeman.

Rick Gibbon, junior from Coeur d'Alene, Idaho tabbed as the team's best skier, will compete in all four events, including slalom, downhill, cross country and jumping.

Others competing will be Rusty Lyons, Walla Wall, Wash. junior, in everything but jumping; Tim Fredrickson, Spokane, Wash. sophomore, in everything but cross country; Pierre Loiselle, Missoula junior, in slalom and downhill.

Dave Lloyd, Claresholm, Alberta junior in everything but slalom; John Dobbins, Kennewick, Wash. sophomore, in slalom and cross country; Mick Hagestad, Kalispell freshman, in downhill and jumping, and Tim Potter, Washington, Conn. freshman, in jumping and cross country.

The Grizzlies will not have any home meets this year, but Nelson is hoping to have at least one next year. Lack of adequate jumping facilities has been the problem, but this is being worked out.