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Grizzlies hosting Big Sky, NCAA regional ski meets

University of Montana–Missoula. Office of University Relations

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The University of Montana will host its second Big Sky Conference winter championship meet in as many weeks Saturday and Sunday when 100-130 skiers from four Big Sky schools and several other Northwest universities get together at the Missoula Snow Bowl.

The meet will decide the Big Sky title and will also function as a qualifying meet for the N.C.A.A. Championships slated at Steamboat Springs, Colo. later in March. The Big Sky wrestling title was decided one week ago on the Missoula campus.

Conference schools on hand for the ski meet will be defending champion Montana State, host Montana, Weber State and Idaho. Idaho State and Gonzaga do not compete in skiing.

Other Northwest schools expected to have representatives or full teams on hand are the University of Washington, the University of Oregon, Central Oregon College, Mount Hood Community College, Ore., Oregon State University, the University of Alaska, Alaska Methodist College, College of Idaho, Boise State College and Ricks College of Idaho.

Last year at McCall, Idaho, Montana State, Washington and Montana qualified as teams for the N.C.A.A. title meet. The top five individual skiers, as well as the top three teams, are all eligible to compete in the nationals.

Montana State is heavily favored to repeat the Big Sky championship for an unprecedented fourth straight year, with Idaho and Montana expected to battle for second.

All five of last year's individual champions in the four events in the league will be here to defend their titles, but skimeister David Lloyd of Montana is not back. The five first-place finishers in four events was accounted for by a tie in the slalom.

Ray Miller of Weber State will begin defending his downhill title Saturday morning at 10:30. That afternoon at 2:30, Terje Skogland of Idaho will attempt to repeat his cross country title, and is favored to do so.
Slalom co-champions Robbie Bell of Weber State and Bob Moss of Montana State will begin a co-defense of their title in the downhill at 10:30 a.m. Sunday, with jumping champ Frank Kalfoss of Montana State trying to fight off challengers in that event starting at 1:30 Sunday afternoon.

Jumping, slalom and downhill events will be at the Snow Bowl, with the cross country course, set by Tor Fageras, former Montana State All-American who works at UM, just below the resort near the Grant Creek Ranch.

Montana's only four-way entry will be Jan Wessel, junior from Oslo, Norway, and he is expected to be a top contender for the league Skimeister award, which goes to the man with the highest cumulative finish in all four events.

Other UM entries will be Rick Gibbon, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho senior, alpine; Rusty Lyons, Waitsburg, Wash. senior, alpine; Craig Menteer, Spokane, Wash. freshman, alpine; Kenn Hugos, Missoula freshman, alpine; Gary Keltz, Butte freshman, nordic; Mick Hagestad, Kalispell sophomore, downhill and jumping; Tim Potter, Washington, Conn. sophomore, cross country, and Mark Robinson, Great Falls freshman, jumping.

UM coach Gary Nelson expects a good showing from his squad, but said that the lack of good jumpers almost eliminates any title hopes for the Grizzlies. Idaho is in the same boat, with no entries at all in jumping. However, Idaho has perhaps the strongest cross country team in the league.