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Game Day Kaimin, December 9, 2000

Associated Students of the University of Montana
Front & Center

Three separate injuries kept quarterback Drew Miller off the field for much of his senior season. Now that he's back, Drew says he's ready to win it all.

Story by Ryan Divish
Great Expectations

INJURIES KEPT DREW MILLER ON THE SIDELINE FOR MUCH OF HIS SENIOR SEASON. NOW THAT HE'S HEALTHY HE'S MAKING UP FOR THE TIME THAT HE HAS MISSED

BY RYAN DIVISH

"The white line's gotten longer and the middle's gotten colder. I'm much too young to feel this damn old." — From the song "Much Too Young," by Garth Brooks

You could see it as he walked off the field last Saturday. Mixed in with the ever-present limp of a man whose body ached at every turn was just a hint of a swagger. A swagger that said, "I haven't a prescience All-American candidate and nominated for the Payton Award for nothing." A swagger that said, "I have been knocked down, knocked around and even knocked out, but I am still here no matter how much it hurts." A swagger that said, "I'm not leaving the game anymore. I will be here for the rest of the season because lifting a National Championship trophy over my head will numb any pain I have felt this season."

It had been awhile, but as Drew Miller walked off the field last Saturday, minutes after dis­­covering the Richmond Spider's sec­­ondary for 361 yards and three touch­­downs and more importantly, for the Griz, there was there. The Griz had defeated Idaho 45-38 and he had thrown for 50 passes in the game, comple­ting 33 for 505 yards and five touchdowns against Eastern Idaho State. Everything was clicking for him, rhythmically, with the exception of one play, playing the whole game, the swagger was back. And no matter how much pain he was in, walk­ing off the field never felt so good. "It felt like I was me again. I was making the plays that I've always been known for and making the throws I am used to making. The advan­tage that I experienced early in the year has finally paid off now."

Senior Dream

"So, wasn't it supposed to be? Senior year was sup­posed to be a dream — a team full of seniors, a Payton Award nomination and scores of expecta­tions. A national title perhaps, All-American status possibly, conference MVP definitely. In the beginning it looked like Miller's dream season would come to fruition. Sure there was the burnout against Hofstra in which he threw for 304 yards, scoring 10 points in a loss at Washington Grizzly Stadium was enough to make Griz fans pre­pare for Armageddon.

One week later against Idaho, Drew found himself in the "zone." Everything he threw was right where he wanted it to be. He could hit a streaking Jimmy Farris on his left shoulder, over a defender the other. Drew landed a "stinger" in his left shoulder. It was just like the time in eighth grade when he had broken his collar bone. As he walked off the field, he couldn't decide what hurt worse — the pain of the injury or the possibility that his season and his career might be over."

But then came the play against Cal State Northridge. Late in the first half, just as he released the ball, a Northridge defender ploved into him. His arm was going one way, the defender the other. Drew landed awkwardly on his right side. An intense burning pain shot through his shoulder. It was just the time like the time in eighth grade when he had broken his collar bone. As he walked off the field, he couldn't decide what hurt worse — the pain of the injury or the possibility that his season and his career might be over."

"I couldn't believe it," Miller said. "I had a lot of emotions going through my head. I was really depressed and very frus­tated. I was completely unsure of the future. When you're on the sidelines Saturday night and you're thinking: I'm not going to know until Monday. How am I supposed to last that long? That unsettling feeling is terr­rible." Luckily, his career wasn't over. It wasn't a broken collar­bone or a sprain, was it? Just an injury he had experienced before. Four weeks, maybe five.

He pushed to get back sooner. A rematch of last sea­son's clash with Portland State's Jimmy Blanchard was two weeks away and God, he couldn't wait to get back on the field and make him. That had been his finest game of last year but in the end, PSU was victorious.

But the shoulder just hurt too sore. The only gear he would be putting on against the Vikings was a headband and street clothes.

"Seeing the Portland State game on the schedule in a cou­ple of weeks was very motivating," Miller said. "It was some­thing I wanted to get back for and it was hard not to play in it. But I was there and I contri­buted the way I could."

His first game back against Idaho State started off fine. He was making plays — a lit­tle rusty at times, as evi­denced by a pair interceptions. And it was on the second interception when Drew got a "stinger" in his left shoulder making the touchdowns-saving tackle. He would watch the sec­ond half of the game from the sideline.

The following week he was on the brink of leading the Griz to a victory over Weber State when a vicious helmet-to-helmet hit knocked him down and knocked him out.

Instead of limping off the field, this time Drew had to be helped off, suffering from a concussion. That injury was bad enough for Drew to miss the 100th meeting of the Griz and Cats. He could only watch and think about next week, when he would play in the Griz's first round playoff game. At first I would watch and think "Make it count!" Miller said. "But then after I get past the first couple of hours and settle into it, you have a bit of doubt. I've been through some injuries and I would have wanted to go through was the ordeal of playing hurt and missing games."

"For the first four or five games, I was completely healthy," Miller said. "I hadn't been in the training room besides for little things like sore feet or things that everybody gets."

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Chad Dundas
GameDay Kaimin

Logic might dictate that, for the No. 11 Appalachian State Mountaineers, the most enticing factor of a Dec. 9 trip to Missoula, Montana would be the opportunity to play for the right to advance to the I-AA national championship game.

Who knows logic? Certainly not ASU.

"A third of our players haven't even ever been on a plane," Mountaineer head coach Jerry Moore said of his team's week-end tour of the Garden City. "So they're all pretty excited about it."

The wonders of modern travel aside, Moore seems hit more dubious about his team's Saturday afternoon lunch date trip or something."

But Montana fans should not be lulled into a false sense of security, with Lou Holtz-esque penchant for underestimating his team's chances. Experts agree, ASU is dangerous.

"It's safe to assume that Montana will come out with a bang," Moore said. "They've got their national championship hopes hanging in the balance."

For ASU, however, the Montana game will be another opportunity to play for the right to advance to the I-AA national championship game.

"Our kids have a lot of respect for Montana," Moore said. "But I think it would be the same way for them if they had backed into this like we have.

"We're making them think Saturday afternoon lunch date or something."

If the Griz win Saturday, look for a special GameDay Kaimin to be published Dec. 19.
**Offense**

**T.J. Oelkers**
Wide Receiver
5-8, 170, junior from Helena, Mont.

T.J. Oelkers' stature and build are throwbacks to the days of old (well, 1995) when undersized powderkegs like Matt Wells blew holes in opposing defenses. It's nice to see that short guys from Montana can still run with the big boys. The season T.J. made the most of his time, snagging 26 passes for 379 yards. It's nice to see that a small Grizzly can still run with the big boys. This week T.J. is playing for the right to advance to the finals of the Buck Buchannon Award (highway robbery if you ask GDK), but this week he's playing for the right to advance to the finals. Petek finished second in voting for the award last year. He's got a shot at a national championship ring this year. Petek finished second in voting for the award last year. He's got a shot at a national championship ring this year.

**Andy Petek**
Defensive End
6-3, 235, senior from Helena, Mont.

Before you Great Falls folks start sending us letters, let us just say that it's a coincidence that both of this week's spotlighted Grizzlies happen to hail from Montana's capital. It's a coincidence in so much as it's a coincidence that Andy Petek picked this season to start eating O-Linemen for lunch. Petek finished second in voting for the Buck Buchannon Award (highway robbery if you ask GDK), but this week he's playing for the right to advance to the finals. Petek finished second in voting for the award last year. He's got a shot at a national championship ring this year. Petek finished second in voting for the award last year. He's got a shot at a national championship ring this year.

**Defense**

**Grizzly Defense**

**Numerical Roster**

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Wilcox 7

Doesn’t look like a tight end, does he? Well, I don’t believe your eyes. Daniel is the best TE in the Southern Conference, coming up 44 catches for 716 yards on the season.

Appalachian State

No. 13

2000 Record • 10-3, 6-2 Southern Conference (third)
1999 Record • 10-2, 7-1 Southern

Offense

Troy Albea
Wide Receiver

5-0, 200, senior from Lincolnton, Ga.

When the Mountaineers go to the air, Albea is their primary target. He leads the team in scoring with 56 points and has gained 174 yards receiving this year. A first-team selection in the Southern Conference, Albea also has 28 carries to his credit for 215 yards. It conditions at Washington-Grizzly Stadium on Saturday, ASU might go to Troy early and often, to test the theory that the Griz can some-

defense

Joe Best
Linebacker

5-11, 245, senior from New Bern, N.C.

Joe is very good, but the selected sports writers and SIDs who decided the Buck Buchanan award didn’t think Joe quite lived up to his name. Although he was one of 16 final-

ists for the award that honors I-AA’s most accomplished
defensive player, Best failed to finish in the top three. He’s second on the team in tackles, tallying 122 in 12 games and

made first-team all-conference in the SoCon.

Numerical Roster

2 7 Troy Albea WR 5-0 200 Sr.
3 9 Reis Washington DB 5-10 195 Jr.
4 11 Remi Awolowo TE 6-0 235 Sr.
5 12 Rashad Slade WR 6-0 180 Sr.
6 13 Sterling Hayward WR 5-10 180 Jr.
7 14 Rashad Slade WR 5-9 185 Sr.
8 15 Jeffries CB 6-3 200 Sr.
9 16 David Reaves OL 6-1 200 Sr.
10 17 Rashad Slade WR 5-9 185 Sr.
11 18 Reis Washington DB 5-10 195 Jr.
12 19 Jason O’Brien DB 6-1 195 Sr.
13 20 Troy Albea WR 6-0 200 Sr.
14 21 Brad Thomas WR 6-2 195 Jr.
15 22 David Reaves OL 6-1 200 Sr.
16 23 Mike Jolley C 6-1 200 Jr.
17 24 Troy Albea WR 6-0 200 Sr.
18 25 Reis Washington DB 5-10 195 Jr.
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Georgia Southern, Delaware match up in repeat of ’97

Georgia Southern coach Paul Johnson said of his team, "We're a very young team," Johnson said, "because of experience. Over 40 players started for the Blue Hens last season because of injuries, so coming into the season, they had an experienced player at every position."

"We started off very strong and kept getting better," Raymond said. The Blue Hens' only defeat was to New Hampshire.

But Raymond said they have yet to play as well in the playoffs, which should scare opposing coaches after the Blue Hens' impressive defeats of Portland State, 49-14, and Montana's Payton Award winning running-back Adrian Peterson.

But like most young teams, they're inconsistent, Johnson said. "We've had our ups and downs and there are times we haven't played very well," Johnson said. "This isn't one of the most talented teams we've had, but we're hungry. They've overachieved all season."
The phrase “nice guys finish last” just doesn’t apply to head coach Joe Glenn.

In fact, it is Glenn’s Gregarious and sincere personality that has elevated his Grizzlies to the top spot in the I-AA and garnered him the award for the best coach in the country.

“I don’t think there is any doubt about it,” assistant coach Dan Doeren said. “It’s this winning attitude he has — and it rubs off on everyone around him.”

Before running onto the field before home games, Glenn takes the time to slap the outstretched hands of the pep band waiting in the tunnel to Washington-Grizzly Stadium.

On his way through the halls of the stadium, Glenn stops to talk with a fan, a player, a coach or a reporter — and he never forgets a name.

“As far as coaches go across the country, he stands out in that regard,” said assistant athletic director Marie Porter.

“When we say ‘working with the fans’ and working with the media,” the thing is, is that I don’t think that’s work to him. He’s a people person.”

Eddie Robinson Award Monday, it marked a special day in history for Montana football. He is the only Montana coach and the second Big Sky conference head and I grabbed him to talk to the coaching staff,” he said.

Glenn remembers sitting across the room from Robinson in a hotel a few years ago.

“I saw him coming down the hall and I grabbed him to talk to the coaching staff,” he said.

“He had more presence, more grace — sitting there, he bordered on being a saint. It wasn’t only what he talked about — values, character, education — but the feeling and conviction he said it with.”

Some characteristics, which Glenn admires so much are the very same qualities that players, fellow coaches and fans praise him for.

“Joe’s personality is just so dynamic that people are hearing about him all across the country,” Porter said.

It is only fitting that Glenn would win an award named for a coach he hails as “like God in this profession.” Glenn doesn’t lie about the award as “his.” He attributes his success to his team, his staff and the support of Griz fans. He said he is “touched” by the award and

Joe Glenn accepted the Eddie Robinson Award Monday, which honors I-AA coach of the year. Joe Glenn accepted the Eddie Robinson Award Monday, which honors I-AA coach of the year.

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Good Luck In The Playoffs GRIZ!

Two Sisters DOWNTOWN MISSOULA

Fun Atmosphere - Close to Campus - Beer & Wine
Congrats to the Big Sky Football Champs
- From Two Sisters -

The Big Sky Culinary Champions
Now With Great Beers & Even Better Wines!

Breakfast - Thurs-Sun
Lunch - Daily
Dinner - Closed Monday

Montana vs. Appalachian State

721-5263
1615 Wyoming, Missoula
Great Expectations

Drew Miller has thrown for 6,520 yards and 50 career touchdown passes, ranking him 5th in UM's all-time passing list.

Every second he stays in the pocket, waiting... waiting... waiting for that receiver to break free, only to be pummeled by an opposing lineman. The soreness that overcomes his body every Sunday after being slammed to the cement-like ground making it difficult to get up out of bed, the hours of painstaking, slow moving rehab to get back in the lineup for them, for his team, for a championship.

That's how he will discredit his doubters — a trip to Chattanooga, a national championship and ultimate redemption.

Playing With Shadows

He won't admit it, but there is a shadow that looms over Washington-Grizzly Stadium. A shadow that says No. 15 and in his senior year, did everything Drew wanted to do. Drew Dickenson will forever cast a shadow on Grizzly QBs. Drew doesn’t consider it negative, but as a set of expectations to live up to — expectations that are no higher than the ones he holds for himself.

I set really high goals for myself... I think you will always be playing under (Dickenson) expectations. The list goes on and on. There have been so many great quarterbacks and obviously, Dave is the one everyone remembers.

But Miller and Dickenson are nothing alike. Drew is the consummate pocket passer with a right arm that seems to have been struck by lightning. Dickenson was the technician with an above average arm and the ability to make something out of nothing. Both have experienced success and both are part of a storied Grizzly quarterback tradition. A tradition that Miller perhaps understands.

"Because there has been so many great quarterbacks, the expectations are high," Miller said. "This town and this state wants the best and has been good enough for a pro career in the game that has consumed his whole life. And if not, then a coaching like his dad or maybe a sports agent. But there is business to take care of. Two more games are all he needs which he hopes will be good enough for him to make it through. Two more Sundays of getting up sore as hell from a Saturday pounding. Two more times, he will drop his body out onto the field and make it with a lot more punishment.

Two more wins and he will have the ultimate goal: a national championship. And no matter how much those two wins hurt, all the pain and hurting will be gone along with the limp. Only the swagger will remain."