Game Day Kaimin, September 29, 2001

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Ciche Pitcher's

Got your number

MONTANA

BY CHAD DUNDAS

MONTANA VS. East. Washington
Nothing but a number

"YOU KNOW THAT THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE THAT ARE WATCHING YOU ALL THE TIME. THEY'RE GOING TO BE JUDGING — DID HE DESERVE THE NUMBER? IS HE PLAYING UP TO IT? THAT'S ALL STUFF THAT I TRY NOT TO WORRY ABOUT. PEOPLE ARE GOING TO SAY WHATEVER THEY'RE GOING TO SAY."

O
to the Pitcher heard whispers.
There were rumors. People were talking.

By the end of the season, when it was time for departing senior Andy Petek to hand down the No. 37 jersey, Pitcher already knew he'd been chosen.

"Last year, people kept saying 'you're going to get it, you're going to get it,'" Pitcher says. "So when the time came I already pretty much knew it was going to be me, just by hearing it through the grapevine without actually being told."

The No. 37-jersey has quickly become one of Montana football's greatest traditions. Rules for ownership are stringent and steadfast: It must be worn by a talented defensive player, always a Montana native, who is the walking embodiment of Grizzly football. Upon graduation, the jersey's owner chooses a successor.

The list of No. 37 alumni is a who's who of UM defenders over the last decade. Defensive back Tim Hauck inaugurated the tradition in 1989 by giving the jersey to Todd Erickson, who awarded it to Linebacker Jason Crebo in 1993. In 1997, Crebo passed the jersey to Petek, who carried it until he graduated after last season.

Since '89 everyone who has worn No. 37 for the Griz has become an All-American. Hauck — whose rib-rattling hits are legendary at Montana — still plays in the NFL, for the Philadelphia Eagles. Erickson signed with the Indianapolis Colts after leaving Montana. Crebo, arguably the most athletic linebacker in Grizzly history, went to camp with the Buffalo Bills. His senior year, Petek was runner-up for the Buck Buchanan Awards, given annually to the best I-AA defender in the nation.

Now Pitcher will wear the number. Growing up in Anaconda, Pitcher says he was not only aware of the No.37 tradition but was an avid fan of all those who wore it.

"Watching those guys play was pretty amazing," he says. "I'm a really big Crebo fan. He was really sweet to watch. The same with Petek ... It got me really excited to come here, watching him play."

Pitcher says carrying the torch of No. 37 is exciting but also a little frightening. He can feel the eyes of the notoriously fickle Montana fans on him. As only a sophomore,

Pitcher is already assured a spot in Grizzly history, and whether it's as the next All-American or the third 37er who didn't live up to the hype depends entirely on his own abilities.

"You know that there are a lot of people that are watching you all the time," Pitcher says. "They're going to be judging — Did he deserve the number? Is he playing up to it? That's all stuff that I try not to worry about. People are going to say whatever they're going to say."

There is pressure inherent in wearing the number. Whether he likes it or not, Pitcher will be compared to those Grizzly greats who created the legend. He'll be measured alongside some of the best who ever wore the uniform — All-Americans, Big Sky Conference MVPs, NFL veterans. It might seem unfair, given that Pitcher was runner-up for the Buck Buchanan Awards, given annually to the best I-AA defender in the nation.

Petek was labeled by some as a defensive end, but he took the designation of All-American or the first 37er to wear the number with great pride.

"Last year, people kept saying that was great was that they'd go into games knowing that they were going to win," Pitcher says. "They had that confidence because they had been there before. That's something that you miss having around. During practice and during the game they were so confident that it made you feel confident also."

The very fact the Pitcher wears No. 37 makes him one of the most visible players on the field. Hardened Montana football fans will naturally look to him to become a leader on a defense populated by young players who haven't yet had a chance to make a name for themselves. At 6-foot-4-inch, 232-pound Pitcher certainly has the physical attributes to become a dominant Big Sky Conference defensive end, but so far isn't terribly comfortable with the idea of being the team's emotional leader.

"I try to lead by example," he says. "I've never been really good vocally getting after people. If anything I try to calm the guys down when they get a little too fired up. I'm not a real rah-rah guy. Our defensive line plays real well when we're relaxed. We're a bunch of young guys and when we loosen up and just play relaxed we seem to play our best."

Indeed, Pitcher is quick to steer any conversation away from his personal accomplishments, preferring to focus on the entire defensive unit. Ask him about his performance last week against Western Washington, when four tackles, two sacks and a fumble recovery earned him a nod as 'player of the game' and he just laughs.

"I like the fact that I can be player of the game because it shows that our whole defense is kind of opening things up and making plays. Something
Griz, Eagles renew rivalry rife with early playoff implications

Carl Hennell
GameDay Kaiman

Fittingly, the Grizzlies’ defense of their Big Sky Conference crown begins with defense.

Consider last Saturday’s shutout of Western Washington, 28-0—a primer for this Saturday’s conference battle against No. 18 Eastern Washington (2-3, 1-0). The Eagles are potent on offense, scoring on all but one of their possessions last week against Weber State.

“Our defense is our bell cow,” said Griz coach Joe Glenn. The Griz defense, ranked 24th in the nation, is averaging 15.7 points allowed per game. The Eagles offense is ranked second nationally, averaging 47.8 yards per game.

EWU senior running back Jesse Chatman rushed for 206 yards last Saturday against WSU, placing him sixth in the nation in rushing yards per game with 147.5. "Jesse ran the ball like he normally does,” said EWU coach Paul Wulff, who's 8-5 in his second year and 0-1 against UM. “He has a lot of ability and is a special kind of back. He got better as the day went on, and that was real important for us.”

Glenn welcomes the challenge of trying to contain Chatman, who lost 16 pounds in the off-season to become more agile.

"Chatman will be one of the best backs we see all year long,” said Glenn. “He just absolutely jumps out at you and jumps out of arm tackles. We’ve got to bring our shoulder pads, got to gang tackle and got to bring our feet.”

Chatman’s performance last week broke EWU’s career touchdown record, with 28. He has rushed for 180 yards in 12 games and has piled up 2,372 career rushing yards.

Griz senior running back Yo Humphrey has 2,809 career rushing yards, 14 100-yard games and tied UM’s 75-year old record of 31 career touchdowns last week.

If the Griz defense succeeds at containing Chatman, which they have done the past two years, EWU will fall back on a quarterback ranked eighth in the nation.

Senior Fred Salanoa has completed 50 of 74 passes for 690 yards and seven touchdowns, and only one interception.

The Eagles boast the best kick-return specialist in the history of I-AA. Lamont Brightful has averaged 33.3 yards in 44 career attempts and single-handedly kept the Eagles in the game last year against the Griz by returning two kickoffs for touchdowns.

So is coach Glenn going to kick the ball to Brightful? “Maybe,” he said, chuckling and grinning from ear to ear.

Glenn has turned to a true freshman to tune up the Griz special teams.

"We think we have found an explosive returner in Levander (Segars),” Glenn said.

Segars returned nine punts for 122 yards last week.

In three of the past five meetings between UM and EWU, the game has been decided by less than a touchdown.

In 1998, EWU lost 30-27 after a missed field goal with 57 seconds left. In 1997, the Eagles scored 20 fourth-quarter points for a 40-35 win. And in 1996, the Griz scored with 30 seconds left to win 34-30.

For the past six years, the winner of this match-up has gone on to win the conference title. The Griz won five of those titles and seven of the past eight meetings.

“I think the winner of this game will definitely be in the driver’s seat to win the conference,” Glenn said.

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Montana vs. Eastern Washington

T.J. Oelkers dashes toward the end zone against Western Washington.
Montana
2001 Record • 2-1, 0-0 Big Sky
2000 Record • 13-2 Overall, 8-0 Big Sky

Offense
John Edwards
Quarterback
6-1, 200 junior from Billings, Mont.
Johnny looked to be back to his old self last week against Western Washington, passing for a career high 277 yards. And folks, don’t think GOK didn’t see a few long passes called back to penalties and a couple drops by Montana’s normally sure-handed receivers. Let’s face facts. If the Griz are to get back to Chattanooga this December, the former Bear from Billings West needs to come through in a big, big way. Eastern Washington might be Edwards’ first big test this season against a top-notch l-AA squad. We’re betting he’s up to the challenge.

Defense
Andy Thompson
Linebacker
6-3, 215 soph. from Walla Walla, Wash.
GOK promised itself that we would write this blurb without using the expression “triple threat” or the old cliché “most bangs for the buck.” But for Andy, they both apply. These three positions, he was forced into action of safety as a freshman, then moved to linebacker as a true sophomore. We’re betting he’ll have another solid year in the middle of the defense. If Thompson can come through in a big way, we think the Griz D will have a problem with Triple Threat Thompson on the team — or, at least, we couldn’t resist.

Numerical Roster

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GRIZ OFFENSE VS

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<td>Calvin Coleman</td>
<td>5-11</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>Los Angeles, Calif.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DB</td>
<td>Joel Rosenberg</td>
<td>5-11</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>SR</td>
<td>Anaheim, Calif.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RB</td>
<td>Branden Malcom</td>
<td>5-11</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>FR</td>
<td>Missoula, Mont.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RB</td>
<td>Tim Crabtree</td>
<td>5-11</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>FR</td>
<td>Denton, Mont.</td>
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<tr>
<td>WR</td>
<td>Andy Thompson</td>
<td>5-11</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>FR</td>
<td>Helena, Mont.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LB</td>
<td>Andy Thompson</td>
<td>5-11</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>FR</td>
<td>Helena, Mont.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GRIZ DEFENSE VS
As only a junior, Adam has emerged as the Eagles' starting center after seeing limited action the last two seasons. He's got a total of 10 of 11 as his starting assignments. "Of course, we've got a lot of competition for 11 of those," he said. "We don't know if dgv's ever a back like Yo Humphrey so this season, so this might be his first chance to see what he's really made of."

It'll be interesting. He's lost the pony tail and anything from the likes of a joke here. Learned Fred spent much Matt Hasselbeck and a ball boy. Insert your own Seattle Seahawks at their through the first two games. He's got a total Connecticut in week one know if Zeiger's seen a back like Yo Humphrey might be his first chance made of."

Portland's recently remodeled PGE
No. 3 vs. No. 15 match-up in Missoula.
would be the featured Big Sky game of
21 and No. 23 teams in the country in
Washington visits the Griz this week­
and Portland State that Eastern
1 GameDay Kaimin, Saturday, September 29, 2001
Visit Marianne's Restaurant
Dinner and a Movie?

The Green Room sc Red Light Bar
Karaoke By Solid Sound
• Movies wih free popcorn
• Beer & Wine Available
Live Events at the Wilma
• Pink Floyd Oct. 12 •
• laser light •
• Dark Star Nov 2-3 •
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Wilma Theatre
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Movie Theatre

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Unlike any other college course you can take.
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or visit us at Schroeder Gym.

GDK PREDICTION: Somebody has to win. This time, a shocker! Weber 10, Sac State 3
Montana State/CUS
MSU's defense is second in the con­
ference in opponent passing efficiency
and leads the Big Sky in sacks.

Wait, there's more good news.
The lowly Bobcats are 1-2 but may
finally break through at home this week
when they host 0-2 Cal State Northridge.

The bad news: 
MSU had hoped to win a game at home
for the first time since the fall of
1999 when they hosted Cal Poly last
week, only to be shamed in a 34-6 defeat.

The 'Cats will get another chance
this weekend to snap their nine-game
home losing streak, but we have to
figure out a way to stop an
adventurous, yet idiotic purebred puppy
kind of a way. MSU 21, CSN 14.

Idaho State/MSU
Northern
The Bengals continue the TOUGH part of their schedule
as they take on Montana State.
Northern in Pocatello this weekend.
ISU has already won a
game against a Frontier
Conference opponent this sea­
son, having beaten Montana
Tech 40-7 in their season opener.
Saturday marks the first time
the schools have ever faced off
on the gridiron.
ISU Quarterback Doug
Baughman is second in the
nation in pass efficiency with a
remarkable 19.3 rating.

GDK PREDICTION: How
'bout them Bengals? What's next, a high school team?
We all know ISU, we know you're going to win this week
but GDK will pick against you just
because we think you're soft.
MSU-Northern 70, ISU 7.

Northern Arizona had been picked to
finish fifth by the coaches in the pre­

NAU offense
The Vikings are still riding
their winning streak.

Walsh said. "They are a team I knew would be
good this year," Walsh said. "They have
too many good athletes and
play extremely hard defend­

If Portland
State is going
to get past the
Lumberjacks and open the
conference sea­
son with a win
the Vikings must
figure out a way to stop an
NAU offense
that is averag­
ing 27 points
per game while its defense only
allows ten. The
ten points per game allowed
by the Jacks is good enough for
top in the Big

Walsh has
his team in
for a struggle this weekend.
They are a team I knew would be

Northern Arizona has been picked to
finish fifth by the coaches in the pre­
season poll but Portland State head
tim Walsh knows his team is in

Portland State is looking to recover
offense and leads the Big Sky in sacks.

Northern in Pocatello this week­
and Portland State that Eastern.

The Lumberjacks also come into the
Big Sky Conference than Weber State.
After losing to Division II
Southern Utah in the season opener,
the Wildcats became the first team in
almost two years to lose to Montana
State. Combine that with a 50-26
drubbing at the hands of Eastern
Washington last week and you're start­

The game will feature the two teams
that rank at or near the bottom in scor­
ing offense, scoring defense, pass
defense, kickoff returns, rushing

No. 23 PSU, No. 2
Sacramento State/Weber State

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Wind and cold, ASU took the Grizzlies to the breaking point before finally falling 19-16 to the Mountaineers from a season ago. Fighting Jimmy Farris, it would have been the dramatic win.

In fact, had it not been for the heroics of quarterback Drew Miller found Farris in the back of the end zone, giving Montana the end of regulation win.

This year, the Mountaineers don’t plan on falling short. Leading the way on offense is junior quarterback Joe Burchette. After starting last year number three on the depth chart, Burchette finished the year as the starting signal caller, finishing with 2,364 yards passing and 16 touchdowns.

Burchette has been throwing to quite a few new faces this year. Gone are the top three receivers from last year, including Troy Allae, who had 11 catches for 177 yards and one touchdown against the Griz.

All-America defensive end and Buck Buchanan candidate Josh Jeffries anchors a solid defense. Jeffries, who had 61 tackles and 11 sacks a year ago, is tearing through offenses single-handedly. In two games, he has 19 tackles, 16 solo with 2.5 sacks and a fumble recovery.

Against Atlantic Coast Conference member Wake Forest, Jeffries had 15 tackles, including 13 solo stops in a 20-10 loss. Jeffries also had a sack that forced a fumble that he recovered. Senior linebacker Justin Seavems is leading the team with 27 total tackles, with 16 solo.

The defense as a unit is giving up 330 total yards a game while giving up 11.5 points per game.

ASU is currently 2-1 after Junior place kicker Erik Rockhold nailed a 37-yard field goal with 2:36 left in the game to propel No. 6 Appalachian State past The Citadel, 8-6. The true test for the Mountaineers will come on Oct. 13, when Georgia Southern comes to town. If ASU can win at home against GSU for the first time since 1993, it might be what the Mountaineers need to propel them to their first national championship.
Nothing but a number

"I TRY TO CALM THE GUYS DOWN WHEN THEY GET A LITTLE TOO FIRED UP. I'M NOT A REAL RAH-RAH GUY."

Continued from page 2

like player of the game is not much of an individual effort. A lot of the plays I was able to make were because the rest of the D-line opened something up for me or the linebackers getting good coverage and giving me time to get a sack."

Pitcher admits that he would like to improve on some aspects of his game. He wants to get bigger, stronger and improve on his overall defense against the run.

"I still don't think I've played as well I can," he says. "I'm still waiting for one of those games where everything's clicking and I'm getting off blocks really well. So far the reason I've been playing pretty well in all the games is because our whole defense has been playing well. I've been getting some plays but I don't feel like I've, personally, been playing as well as I can. Not yet at least."

While he knows that it's way too early in his career to start thinking about his legacy, Pitcher says he's looking forward to the opportunity he's been given. He's got a long road ahead of him, but he seems mindful that he has the chance to amend the list of Grizzly stars who've worn No. 37. If he has his way that list of Montana native All-Americans will read Hauck, Erickson, Crebo, Petek and Pitcher.

"In the back of your head when you come here it's something that you want to accomplish," he says. "So that's something that I'm excited about."