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BIG SKY SWIM MEET OPENS AT
NOON THURSDAY IN GRIZZLY POOL

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The 1974 Big Sky Conference swimming championships begin Thursday in the Grizzly Pool on the UM campus with preliminaries in five events scheduled at noon and finals in the same five events to be conducted at 7 p.m.

The host Grizzlies will be looking for a ninth straight title and coach Fred Stetson is hopeful that his squad will get a fast start. "If a team can get into a 10 or 15 point lead Thursday evening, it will be a great boost for them psychologically," Stetson said.

Thursday's competition will open with the 500-yard freestyle race and include the 200-yard individual medley, the 50-yard freestyle, the one-meter diving and the 400-yard medley relay.

The afternoon session will consist of qualifying heats and diving trials for the evening events.

Montana and the University of Idaho are expected to battle for the team title in the four-team meet. The Vandals and Grizzlies engaged in a close battle in a dual meet earlier in the season that UM won 64-49.

Montana has defending champions in five individual events and Vandals Burt Stratton and Gary Pflueger combined for four wins last year.

Stratton won the individual maximum of three events last year. A swimmer is allowed to enter three individual events and Stratton was the winner of the 200-yard individual medley and the 100- and 200-yard breaststroke races. Idaho's Gary Pflueger will be out to retain his 400-yard individual medley title.

Montana's defending titlists are Bob Heinrich, one-meter diving; John Collier, the 100- and 200-yard butterfly races, and Carl Ammons, 100- and 200-yard backstroke events.

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Weber State's Ron Smith is the three-meter champion. He and UM's Heinrich and Steve Kerr are expected to do spectacular and close battle in both diving events.

Stetson said he expects the meet to be close and highlighted by evenly matched individual duals. "We won't have many records outside of the 500- and 1650-yard freestyle races, but all of the races will be close," Stetson said. "The 50-yard freestyle will be special," he commented. "Anyone could win it and only a few inches will separate the first four or five swimmers."

In addition to full teams from Montana, Idaho and Weber State, Gonzaga will bring a small contingent from Spokane.

Preliminaries and finals are scheduled for six more events Friday. Friday's prelims will be at 10 a.m. and the finals will begin at 4 p.m.

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