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GRIZ BEGIN NEW SEASON

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MISSOULA--

A new season begins for the University of Montana football team when Weber State's Wildcats invade the Grizzly lair for the home opener Saturday.

The game marks the beginning of Big Sky Conference play for the Grizzlies and the end of a rugged nonconference slate. The following weekend Northern Arizona visits Dornblaser Field, and the two home contests provide UM with ample opportunity to develop momentum for a run at the Big Sky title.

Although Montana has lost its first three games, the UM coaching staff and players feel they are ready to turn things around.

"We have played some good football the last two weekends and hope to put it all together in the next two games," Coach Jack Swarthout said.

Ten days ago UM took a 10-0 halftime lead over homestanding South Dakota before succumbing in the fourth quarter, and last Saturday night led nationally ranked Nevada-Las Vegas until the final five seconds.

The last second 20-17 loss to the seventh ranked Rebels failed to douse Swarthout's enthusiasm for his team's play. "The kids hustled, worked hard and played themselves a fine football game," Swarthout said.

The UM mentor reeled off the names of eight or nine players who he thought played particularly well then stopped in midsentence. "Just a minute," he said. "I could single out everybody because it was a team effort and everyone played well."

Swarthout said special recognition had to go to Greg Carter for two interceptions, Ron Rosenberg for 12 tackles despite playing with the flu, and John Buxton for two quarterback sacks.

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Middle guard Greg Harris saw his first action of the season and Swarthout praised his play.

Offensively, junior halfback Wyatt McCraw rambled for 103 yards in 13 carries and fullback Bob Smith gained 56 yards while playing with a bruised back. The coaching staff's study of the game films also revealed strong and steady blocking by the offensive line.

"We turned in a good football game," Swarthout said. "It is a shame to not come away with a win."

Weber State has won two straight games after an opening 28-10 loss to Las Vegas. The Wildcats beat Cal-Northridge 28-0 and Cal-Fullerton 31-21 behind the sterling running of tailback Don Reddic. Reddic, a 5-10, 193-pound speedster, gained 103 yards against Northridge then exploded for 183 yards against Fullerton Saturday afternoon.

Game time at Dornblaser Field is set for 1:30 p.m. for both the Weber State and Northern Arizona contests.

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