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MONTANA SKIERS LEAVE
FOR NCAA MEET

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MISSOULA--

Nine University of Montana skiers left for the NCAA championships at Lead, S.D., Monday morning, hoping to break into the nation's top ten when the meet is concluded next Sunday.

Coach Rusty Lyons, who guided his Tips to their second straight Big Sky title two weeks ago, said Montana seems much stronger than the 1970 team that finished 12th. "We have the same team with the exception of Jan Wessel this year," Lyons said.

The three-day finals begin Thursday on the 7,071-foot Terry Peak near Lead with perennial powerhouse Denver University favored to retain the title. If Denver succeeds it will be the 14th team title for the Pioneers since the NCAA sanctioned the meet in 1954 and their third consecutive title.

Montana's Tom Zachary is the Grizzly hopeful to earn All-American honors. The NCAA recognizes the top five finishers in each event as All-Americans.

Last year Zachary, then a freshman, finished tenth in the alpine combined with a 12th in the slalom and 14th in the giant slalom. Zachary's time in the giant slalom was 158.83, just seven seconds off the championship pace set by Denver's Otto Tschudi. Tschudi will be back to defend his title. In the slalom Zachary's 99.94 clocking was less than five seconds behind champion Mike Porcarelli's of Colorado.

Lyons feels Zachary's best event is the downhill which wasn't run last year at Cannon Mountain, New Hampshire. The event has been added to the 1971 itinerary. "I think that if Zachary skis as well in this year's finals, he'll be in the downhill's top five," Lyons said.

Zachary also has a shot at the Skimeister Award given for the best all-around performer including both alpine and nordic events. The McCall, Ida., sophomore finished second in the Big Sky jumping at Snow Basin and last year he was 60th in the NCAA's. Denver's Odd Hammernes, fifth in the 1970 meet, is the event favorite.

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Based on the Grizzly team performance, Lyons feels the best chance Montana has to win an event title is in the jumping. Last year sophomore Allen Anderson finished 53rd in the jumping and is much improved this year.

Lyons said Anderson's third place finish at the Big Sky meet was no indication of his ability. "Al's great on big jumps and that one at Weber was just a bump on the hill." The jumpers will use a 60 meter jump at Lead.

Anderson will have help in the jumping from Big Sky champion Jon Williamson, a Bozeman freshman, Zachary and Gary Keltz. Last year Keltz finished 61st in the NCAA jumping behind Zachary, 60th.

The Grizzlies proved they had jumping power this season beating Wyoming, 1969 NCAA team champion, at Banff in January. The Cowboys finished second to Denver in the 1970 jumping competition.

In the cross country competition, Montana has Keltz who finished 42nd last year and Mike Dillon, the 47th place winner. Dillon is recovering from a knee injury acquired at the Montana Invitational a month ago and should be at full strength. The Grizzlies also will have Williamson who sat out the Big Sky cross country competition with the flu. One of the main reasons Lyons is confident the Grizzly skiers will place in the top ten is the addition of the downhill. "We're a downhill team mainly because we have a lot of dare-devils," the Montana coach said.

In the downhill Montana will have Bob Gordon, Kenn Hugos, Craig Menteer and Mike Dillon. Menteer and Hugos finished 44th and 45th in last year's giant slalom and Dillon was 53rd. Norwegian freshman Claus Urbye is the final addition to the downhill team. The same team will compete in the slalom.

The slalom has been Montana's ^{weakest} event in the alpine competition this year. Zachary hasn't completed a race without falling this year. He has finished every slalom but lost valuable seconds.

The Grizzly's main hope in the slalom is Gordon. The Missoula junior has near perfect form and has developed into a Big Sky title threat. Gordon finished fifth in the conference meet near Ogden.

Lyons said Gordon's only problem is his weight. "He is so light that he has trouble staying on a fast course." Gordon tips the scales near the 165 lb. mark.

Last year the only other Big Sky team to score in the meet was Northern Arizona, which officially was not a conference member then. The Lumberjacks finished 14th in the team standings.

Montana State is the other Big Sky team in the/finals, but some Weber and Northern Arizona qualifiers will compete. ###