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2-19-80

GRIZZLIES TRAVEL TO MONTANA STATE  
FOR 1979-80 REGULAR-SEASON FINALE

It's a good bet that both the University of Montana and Montana State University will qualify for the upcoming Big Sky Conference tournament in Ogden, Utah, and it's also a good bet that the teams' meeting Saturday, Feb. 23, in Bozeman could be a critical one. Tipoff is 8 p.m.

The UM Cubs will play the Montana State JV team in the preliminary game starting at 5:45 p.m.

Bill Schwanke and KYLT-Radio will broadcast the game beginning at 7:45 p.m.

Montana, which is now 15-10 overall, needs to win Saturday for a third-place finish in the conference. Both the Grizzlies and Bobcats are 7-6 in the Big Sky, tied for third place. The winner of the game will probably meet Idaho (or the second-place finisher in the conference), while the loser will open with the host Weber State Wildcats. The playoffs are the weekend of Feb. 29 to March 1.

The Bobcats, who are 14-10 overall, have not qualified for the conference tournament since the 1976-77 season. Montana, meanwhile, will have qualified the last three straight seasons if they make it this year.

The only other team that has a chance to make the playoffs is Nevada-Reno, which must win its final two games on the road at Idaho and Boise State to qualify if Montana loses to Montana State. If Reno loses at Idaho Thursday, UM is assured of a playoff berth.

Coach Mike Montgomery's team improved its record to 15-10 Monday evening, Feb. 18, defeating visiting Portland State 88-70 in a non-league game. Grizzlies Blaine Taylor and Tim McCauley combined for 41 points, scoring 24 and 17 points respectively. It was McCauley's career high, and his final game in Missoula.

(over)

Montana trails in the series 90 to 117, although UM has won 11 of the last 16, including a 92-78 victory in Missoula earlier this season. In that game, which was carried statewide by KECI-TV of Missoula, the score was 75-70 Montana with 3:08 remaining when Grizzly free throws put the game out of reach for the Bobcats. A Dahlberg Arena record crowd of 9,528 was in attendance.

"We're going to have a strong game from the whole team, and play good defense," Montgomery said. "We have to be patient and take good shots, and not get caught up in the transition type of game Montana State likes."

In the teams' previous meeting Jan. 26, UM's Craig Zanon and MSU's Arnold McDowell shared scoring honors with 25 points each. John Stroeder added 22 for UM, while Doug Hashley had 19 for MSU. A key stat was the Cats' 23 turnovers, while UM had a seasonal low of 10.

Stroeder, who scored 11 points in his final game in Missoula against Portland State, now has 907 career points, ranking him 10th on the all-time Grizzly list. Ben DeMers (1973-77) is 9th with 927 points.

Montana holds a slim two-game win streak in the series, which began in 1906. UM beat MSU 55-53 in Missoula last year, and lost 57-50 in Bozeman.

The probable starters, with scoring and rebounding averages:

<u>MONTANA</u>	<u>MONTANA STATE</u>
G--Blaine Taylor (11.1, 2.7)	Mick Durham (9.8, 2.2)
G--Craig Zanon (15.1, 3.6)	Harry Heineken (12.3, 4.0)
C--John Stroeder (10.8, 6.9)	Bill Kreiger (7.3, 6.3)
F--Rod Brandon (7.3, 5.4)	Doug Hashley (17.0, 8.8)
F--Marty Green (6.7, 4.6)	Arnold McDowell (17.4, 4.6)
6--Tim Knight (5.8, 3.5)	Marshall Plantz (4.9, 2.6)
COACH--MIKE MONTGOMERY (29-23, 2 years)	BRUCE HAROLDSON (114-53, 6 years)

#### BIG SKY STANDINGS

	<u>Conference</u>	<u>Overall</u>
Weber State *	12-1	23-2
Idaho*	7-5	15-9
MONTANA	7-6	15-10
Montana State*	7-6	14-10
Nevada-Reno	5-7	10-17
Idaho State	5-8	10-16
Northern Arizona	4-8	13-11
Boise State	3-9	9-15

\*Clinched playoff berth

Games Thursday, Feb. 21: Reno at Idaho; N. Arizona at Boise State. Games Saturday, Feb. 23: Montana at Montana State; Idaho State at Weber State; Reno at Boise State; N. Arizona at Idaho.