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FOUR STARTERS RETURN FOR 1980-81
GRIZZLY BASKETBALL SEASON

MISSOULA--

Four returning starters and 11 lettermen add up to expectations of a successful season for Grizzly head coach Mike Montgomery and his young, aggressive staff in 1980-81.

"This is the first year since I've been here that we've had as many veteran starters and players with experience coming back," Montgomery said. (The coach is beginning his fifth year at UM, and his third year as head coach.)

Montgomery is speaking of returning starters Craig Zanon (6-6), Blaine Taylor (6-1½), Rod Brandon (6-6), and Marty Green (6-9). Players with experience include Tim Knight (6-8), Derrick Pope (6-6), Craig Larsen (6-11), Jim Caler (6-6), Brian Morris (6-6) and Dave Johnson (6-10). Injury redshirt Marc Glass (6-3) returns and is expected to give quality depth to the guard position.

"The veterans know the system, have played together and complement each other very well. I think we have a chance to have a very good year," Montgomery said. "The question mark is at center, where we will be weakened by the loss of John Stroeder (three-time All-Big Sky Conference). We're hoping Larsen will be ready to take over that position. He has all the skills necessary to be an excellent center."

The 1980-81 Grizzlies will also have newcomers Rob Hurley (6-4) from Anaconda, Mont.; Dave Johnson (6-4) from Los Angeles; Doug Selvig (6-4) from Outlook, Mont. and Ron Brumfield (6-7) from San Jose, Calif., to shore up their depth.

"We feel optimistic, because it's obvious we could be a good basketball team," Montgomery said. "But a lot of things will have to happen for us to be of championship caliber. Key injuries are always a factor. We need significant improvement from all of our returnees."

Montgomery said he expected the conference to be "very well balanced, based on the fact that no one team goes into the season as an overwhelming favorite. Weber State won't have the talent they have had in the past two years." He added that he thought most of the teams in the conference were capable of winning the title. "The most consistent teams will be the ones that will be in the chase," he said.

"As far as we're concerned, we've got to continue to improve our ability to score," Montgomery continued. "But we expect defense will again play a key role in our success."

The Grizzlies have led the Big Sky in defense the last nine seasons in a row, and hold the top defensive scoring average (60.3). UM has been in the top 20 nationally the past two years, including fourth in 1978-79.

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