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ELWAY EVALUATES DEFENSIVE BACKS; CALLS SITUATION IDEAL

MISSOULA---

University of Montana first assistant coach Jack Elway, who handles the defensive secondary for head coach Jack Swarthout, is a happy man. And well he should be.

Elway has nine defensive backs with which to work, including four seniors who will start, four sophomores who could start at any time, and a junior who came out on his own lacking experience, but who is trying hard and hitting solidly nevertheless.

"Our defensive secondary racked up some pretty outstanding statistics last season," Elway said. "This group we have this year faces quite a chore trying to equal this, but I think they can do better."

Last year's secondary, composed of three juniors and one senior, intercepted 19 passes, or one of every 10 thrown by the opposition. Five of every 10 passes thrown against them fell incomplete.

"So far, the boys look real good," Elway said. "Our situation is ideal, with all four seniors starting, but meanwhile being pushed by four sophomores who'll be with us for three seasons."

Elway describes his secondary sophomores as "real talented." He says he will not be afraid to use any one of them in a tight spot.

"They'll not only gain a tremendous amount of playing experience, but they'll be pushing our starters all season long," he said.

Six of the 19 Grizzly interceptions last season were taken down by Mick O'Neill of Walla Walla, Wash. According to Elway, O'Neill has improved a great deal in the area in which he was lacking as a junior---hard solid, hitting.

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The other two returnees from last season's secondary, Mace Gray of Baltimore, Md. and Larue Nelson of New Orleans, La., have also shown improvement in all areas of their work.

The only newcomer to the secondary is converted offensive wingback Gartha Morgan of Seattle, Wash., whose hard hitting and quick reactions have impressed Elway immensely.

"Gartha played some defense in junior college, and I think he could come on to be one of our best," Elway said.

The four "Whiz Kids" in the Grizzly defensive secondary this season are Pat Schruth of Billings, Bob Guptill and Pat Dolan of Great Falls, and John Waxham of Mountlake Terrace, Wash.

"These kids are as eager to play as anyone on the squad," Elway said. "They're hard workers, they learn fast, and believe me, they'll see action for us."

The junior who came out on his own is Mike Lyngstad, the University's record-holding javelin thrower from Columbia Falls. Mike hasn't played since his high school days, and has a lot of catching up to do.

"Mike's a hard worker, and a hard hitter, but he needs more work and experience," Elway said.

So it'll be Morgan, O'Neill, Gray and Nelson in the starting lineup against North Dakota Sept. 14 in Billings, barring injuries. But look out for the "Whiz Kids!"