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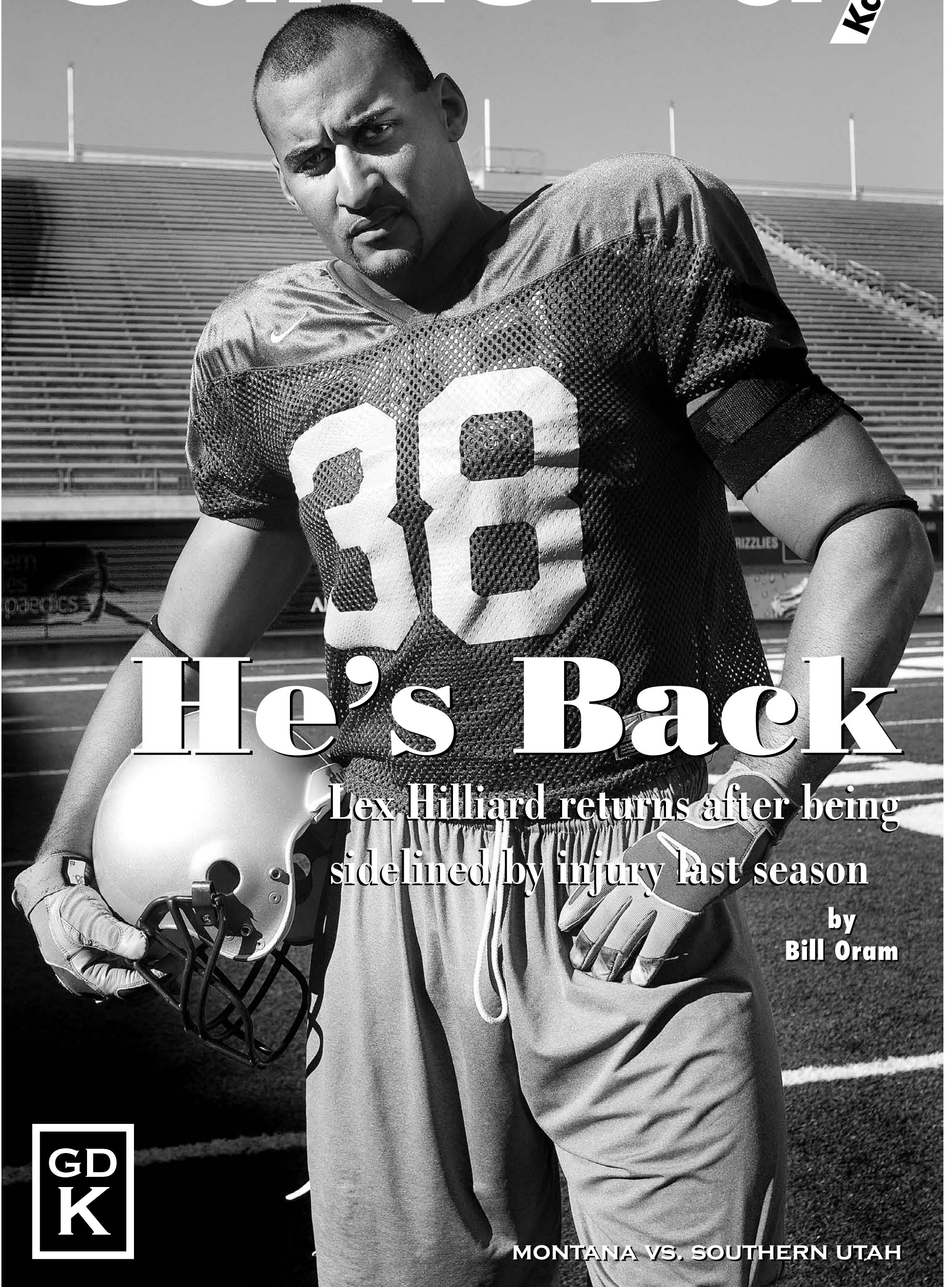
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The original, complete guide to Grizzly athletics

Game Day

Kaimin



He's Back

Lex Hilliard returns after being sidelined by injury last season

by
Bill Oram



MONTANA VS. SOUTHERN UTAH



Tim Kupsick/GameDay Kaimin

Lex Hilliard carries the ball during a practice this week at Riverbowl Fields. Hilliard returns to the field for the Griz today after injuring his left Achilles tendon during fall practice before the 2006 season. Hilliard is 1,186 yards from UM's all-time rushing record.

The wait is over Lex Hilliard returns to the football field

Bill Oram
GAMEDAY KAIMIN

It was just a routine drill. Something he'd done probably 20,000 times. Certainly nothing as tough as any one of his rushes en route to the 2,884 career yards next to his name in the record books.

Three powerful steps and he'd be in the end zone, past linebacker Shawn Lebsock, and back on the sideline waiting for the next drill. But Lex Hilliard didn't make a single step.

As he pushed off his left leg, the Montana Grizzlies' offensive workhorse felt his leg buckle. His first thought was that a prankster teammate stepped on his heel. But as he looked back from the ground he saw no one.

A hot pain shot up his calf, like it had been seared by a blowtorch. He likens the initial pop to being thwacked by a Barry Bonds swing.

Lebsock, who had the closest view of the incident, called the series of events "really weird and creepy." The linebacker, who will sit out this season with his own injury, never touched Hilliard — he just watched him collapse. Then he noticed a lump protruding from the running back's lower calf.

Lying on the ground, Hilliard reached to where his Achilles tendon should have been, and felt only mush.

"I wish somebody had stepped on me or something," Hilliard says, the scowl that seems perma-

nently chiseled into his face softening, "so it could have been that instead."

On the second day of 2006 fall practice, Lex Hilliard's senior season was already over, the result of a ruptured Achilles.

The nasty injury is that of weekend warriors; of beer-swilling, middle-aged, pot-bellied slow-pitch softball players. Not of finely tuned physical specimens. Not of 21-year-old star athletes. Not of Lex Hilliard.

The perennial Walter Payton Award candidate never complained of tendonitis in his Achilles before the injury, and showed no other standard preemptive signs associated with a ruptured tendon.

"When it happens to someone that's in as good as shape as he is, it's kind of the same chance as getting hit by a lightning bolt" says Chad Kay of Northern Rockies Rehabilitation and Athletic Training Center, who worked as Hilliard's primary physical therapist during the recovery.

Reconstructive surgery was the day after the injury and rehab was the next eight months.

"From what I know about it, there's really no reason it should have blown," says Kay, a Big Sky Conference running back from 1993-94. "It just did. Just unlucky."

Though he was supposed to be a senior last year, the 6-foot, 240-pound Hilliard turned to the medical red-shirt he had available,

which granted him a second chance. It also gave him a reason to work for 2007.

"Probably the first couple of weeks of rehab was probably the worst pain," Hilliard says now. "It was probably worse than the actual injury itself because you had to get therapeutic massages into the Achilles after it had been ruptured just to start the healing process."

Initially, Hilliard's therapy focused on letting the reconnected Achilles heal, and then slowly the exercises progressed to calf raises, and exercises to test how much weight the Achilles could support.

"It just all goes so slow," Hilliard says. "You're just waiting and waiting and waiting, just until the day you can even hop or skip. I mean, every little inch you just get more excited, more excited, just until you're able to run again."

There was no chance he would return for any of the 2006 season. Hilliard, who had never before suffered a serious injury, knew it from the moment he felt that pop in his leg. His goals going into the season focused on a national championship and, though he won't admit it, likely Montana's career rushing record. After the injury, his goal was more elementary.

"I was going to be able to run out of the tunnel," he says. And he did. It was before the team's last game, a heartbreaking playoff defeat at the hands of the University of Massachusetts, and

the crowd roared.

"It took a long time to get to that point," Hilliard says, "but it's worth it now."

Everyone who was around Hilliard last year says he remained optimistic and focused, determined to come back stronger and better.

"Battling significant injury is hard mentally," head coach Bobby Hauck says. "It's always interesting to see how guys will respond and react. As expected, he has come back like a champion."

In fall camp Hilliard appeared to be in top form.

He ran with the power and intelligence of someone who hadn't missed any time at all, or maybe like someone for whom playing football is a sixth sense.

That he maintained a positive outlook throughout the ordeal is almost incomprehensible to some.

"I can't imagine," says junior center Colin Dow, who injured his leg in a motorcycle accident over the summer. "I was only out for half of fall camp and I couldn't keep my head up."

It wasn't hard to remain upbeat, Hilliard says now. Being sidelined on crutches was motivation enough, he says, "watching games, realizing you want to be out there."

Despite Hilliard not being in the huddle last season, teammates rallied around him.

"I think it spoke volumes about the kind of person he is, that after he was injured, his teammates still voted him a captain," Hauck says.

"So he was actively involved in the team in the locker room, he just wasn't on the field."

Wide receiver Rob Schulte says having Hilliard back on the team this year makes everyone's job a little easier.

"Any time you've got a stud at a position like that," he says, "whether it's an offensive lineman or whatever, it just takes tension off the other parts of the offense."

At practices this season Hilliard saw players on the field anxious to run off for a drink of water, or a quick breather. He's quick to remind teammates they should stay on the field as much as they can.

"Just now you're like, 'Whatever.' I've stood on the sideline for a year, it's not any fun over there," Hilliard says. "It's nothing you want to be a part of."

The rushing record, however, is something his teammates want to be a part of. It's not the team's main focus, but players acknowledge it would be nice to send Hilliard out on top.

"There's 1,186 yards until he gets that record," Dow says. "We (the offensive line) have a goal in mind for him to get that. Obviously some of that is on our shoulders, actually a lot of it is. I have no doubt that he's going to make it."

The ever-positive Hilliard maintains he isn't concerned about the rushing record. He is just happy to be able to take things in stride again.

Grizzlies to be tested early by Thunderbirds

Bill Oram
GAMEDAY KAIMIN

Finally, today all of the University of Montana football players will be wearing the same color jerseys.

With the Southern Utah Thunderbirds in town, anything resembling practice has come to an end. Any fine-tuning of the offense, defense or special teams will have to be done on the fly.

According to Griz head coach Bobby Hauck, the team is ready.

"We've had good work from the end of last season to now," Hauck said. "We're right where we ought to be."

The last time the Griz ran out of the tunnel onto John Hoyt Field in

front of a packed house was in anticipation of a national semi-final against the University of Massachusetts Minutemen. The Griz narrowly lost that game 19-17, and according to senior running back Reggie Bradshaw, nothing could be better than getting back on the field.

"We're really excited," he said. "We've been at it since the end of last season. We've been out there grinding."

In Southern Utah the Grizzlies face a team that is recovering from a dismal 3-8 season and was winless in the five-team Great West Conference. However, the mark may be somewhat misleading, according to fourth year T-Bird's coach Wes Meier.

"We've got a group back that is very competitive, that has played a lot of ranked teams," he said.

Last season SUU burst out to a 3-1 record before going on a rest-of-the-season winless streak. However, it dropped back-to-back games to perennial national powers in Cal Poly and McNeese State by a combined eight points. Against Cal Poly, the T-Birds fumbled three times inside the five-yard line.

"They have a lot of confidence," Meier said. "They know they can be competitive, but they also know it's going to take a game with very few mistakes to (beat Montana)."

Hauck and UM's schedule makers have received criticism for

scheduling a slate of unimpressive non-conference opponents – Albany and Fort Lewis College are the others, – but Hauck discounted that notion immediately.

"You'd have to be an idiot not to know these guys would be hard to beat," Hauck said of Southern Utah.

The T-Birds' strength will likely be experience. They return six all-conference players, including play caller Wes Marshall, a player that worries Hauck.

"Their quarterback worries me, he's a veteran," Hauck said. "So we won't be fooling him. He's seen everything 100 times. He's athletic; he can run and pass, he runs the option, he throws the ball down the field well."

Marshall's numbers from a year ago are solid, but not gaudy. He had a 56 percent completion rate and passed for 1,942 yards. His 14 interceptions should have the Grizzly secondary salivating.

One of many storylines for Montana is its own quarterback. Junior Cole Bergquist has finally been handed the keys to the team after patiently waiting in the wings, playing when past starters went down. He started one game last year and eight in 2005.

Once inside Washington-Grizzly Stadium, the T-Birds will find themselves in an environment unlike anything they have experienced in the Great West Conference.

"We've done all kinds of things to try to not let that become such a factor for us," Meier said. The team piped ear-splitting crowd noise into its own stadium in an effort to simulate the raucousness of Montana's 23,183 (capacity) fans.

The Grizzlies lead the all-time series 2-1, the most recent tilt being in 2002. Three T-Birds from that team are currently on Meiers' staff, and he said they've talked about that game, a 68-45 shootout that the Griz won, being among their career favorites.

GAMEDAY KAIMIN

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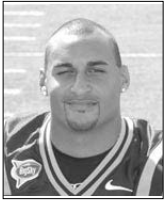
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Offense



#38 Lex Hilliard

Running back

6'0" 240 lbs, senior, sociology

Everyone but opposing defenses is happy to see this Walter Payton Award candidate off of the sidelines and back on the field. In 2005 he rushed for 1,322 yards and had 12 touchdowns. In his career, Hilliard has 2,884 yards and 34 touchdowns and isn't far from breaking a school record.

Defense



#53 Kroy Biermann

Defensive end

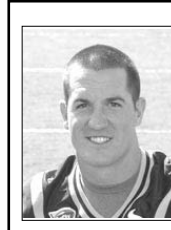
6'3", 241 lbs, senior, sociology

Last season, Biermann was tabbed an All-American by the Associated Press, The Sports Network, and Walter Camp. He ranks eighth in Griz history with 18.5 career sacks, 11 of which came last season. Southern Utah better watch out for this Buck Buchanan Award nominee, as he tallied 78 tackles in 2006.

NUMERICAL ROSTER

| | | | | | | |
|----|------------------------|----|-----|------|---------|----------------------|
| 2 | Craig Chambers | SR | WR | 6-4 | 196 lbs | Mill Creek, WA |
| 3 | Ryan Bagley | SR | WR | 6-4 | 219 lbs | Great Falls, MT |
| 4 | Muckie Foreman | SR | LB | 6-1 | 215 lbs | Spanaway, WA |
| 5 | Eric Allen | SR | WR | 6-3 | 205 lbs | Colorado Springs, CO |
| 6 | Tyler Joyce | SR | LB | 6-5 | 224 lbs | Aurora, CO |
| 7 | Jeff Larson | FR | QB | 6-4 | 212 lbs | Cutbank, MT |
| 8 | Rob Schulte | JR | WR | 5-8 | 179 lbs | Great Falls, MT |
| 9 | Tim Parks | SR | CB | 5-10 | 186 lbs | Moreno Valley, CA |
| 10 | Jamaine Olson | JR | CB | 5-11 | 168 lbs | Beaverton, OR |
| 11 | Matt Troxel | JR | WR | 5-9 | 177 lbs | Coeur d' Alene, ID |
| 12 | Andrew Selle | FR | QB | 6-2 | 215 lbs | Billings, MT |
| 13 | Mike Vandenberg | SO | CB | 5-10 | 177 lbs | Moraga, CA |
| 14 | Cole Bergquist | JR | QB | 6-2 | 206 lbs | San Clemente, CA |
| 16 | Clint Stapp | SO | QB | 6-3 | 224 lbs | Niwot, CO |
| 17 | Van Cooper Jr. | SR | S | 6-2 | 205 lbs | Denver, CO |
| 18 | Ciarre Campbell | JR | CB | 6-2 | 168 lbs | Golden, CO |
| 19 | Colt Anderson | JR | S | 5-10 | 185 lbs | Butte, MT |
| 20 | Reggie Bradshaw | SR | RB | 6-0 | 216 lbs | Coquitlam, BC |
| 21 | Chris Clark | SR | CB | 5-11 | 156 lbs | Los Angeles, CA |
| 23 | Chase Reynolds | FR | WR | 5-10 | 181 lbs | Drummond, MT |
| 24 | Thomas Brooks-Fletcher | SO | RB | 5-10 | 208 lbs | Bellevue, WA |
| 25 | Brandon Fisher | SO | S | 5-10 | 195 lbs | Franklin, TN |
| 26 | Tyson Johnson | SR | P | 6-2 | 189 lbs | Stevensville, MT |
| 27 | Jeremy Pate | FR | CB | 6-1 | 185 lbs | Las Vegas, NV |
| 28 | Andrew Schmidt | JR | RB | 6-1 | 209 lbs | Bozeman, MT |
| 29 | Dan Carpenter | SR | K/P | 6-2 | 207 lbs | Helena, MT |
| 30 | Brandon Dwyer | JR | CB | 5-10 | 206 lbs | Kalispell, MT |
| 31 | Tim Anderson | SO | S | 6-0 | 204 lbs | Missoula, MT |
| 32 | Torrey Thomas | SR | S | 6-0 | 194 lbs | Dillon, MT |
| 33 | Brandon Utterback | SO | RB | 6-0 | 197 lbs | Fort Benton, MT |
| 34 | Quinton Jackson | SR | CB | 5-11 | 178 lbs | Seattle, WA |
| 35 | Tom Martin | JR | LB | 5-10 | 204 lbs | Columbus, MT |
| 36 | Houston Stockton | FR | DB | 5-9 | 161 lbs | Spokane, WA |
| 37 | Loren Utterback | SR | LB | 6-2 | 215 lbs | Fort Benton, MT |
| 38 | Lex Hilliard | SR | RB | 6-0 | 240 lbs | Kalispell, MT |
| 39 | Shann Schillinger | SO | S | 6-1 | 197 lbs | Baker, MT |
| 40 | Greg Coleman | JR | RB | 6-0 | 239 lbs | Peoria, IL |
| 41 | Erik Stoll | SO | S | 6-2 | 200 lbs | Sandpoint, ID |
| 42 | Jace Palmer | SO | DE | 6-3 | 223 lbs | Missoula, MT |
| 43 | Alex Hawthorne | SR | LB | 6-2 | 249 lbs | Mesa, AZ |
| 44 | Jesse Brown | SR | S | 5-11 | 193 lbs | Bozeman, MT |
| 45 | Andy Gonzales | SO | LB | 6-0 | 218 lbs | Portland, OR |
| 46 | Kyle Ryan | SR | LB | 6-3 | 228 lbs | Billings, MT |
| 47 | Severin Campbell | FR | LB | 6-4 | 203 lbs | Golden, CO |
| 48 | Joseph Smith | SO | CB | 5-10 | 184 lbs | Rowland Heights, CA |
| 49 | Kevin Klaboe | SO | HB | 6-2 | 216 lbs | Billings, MT |
| 50 | Craig Mettler | JR | DT | 6-3 | 272 lbs | Walla Walla, WA |
| 51 | Tyler Pelleur | SO | LB | 6-2 | 220 lbs | Sammamish, WA |
| 52 | Shawn Lebsock | JR | LB | 6-0 | 215 lbs | Billings, MT |
| 53 | Kroy Biermann | SR | DE | 6-3 | 241 lbs | Hardin, MT |
| 54 | Austin Mullins | SO | DE | 6-2 | 248 lbs | Great Falls, MT |
| 55 | Dan Carter | JR | OG | 6-5 | 312 lbs | Bellingham, WA |
| 56 | Tyler Corwin | JR | LB | 6-3 | 231 lbs | Great Falls, MT |
| 57 | Karl Pitcher | JR | DE | 6-2 | 227 lbs | Anaconda, MT |
| 58 | Paul LaMantia | JR | DT | 6-2 | 276 lbs | Oakdale, CA |
| 59 | Kelly Kain | SR | DT | 6-4 | 281 lbs | Great Falls, MT |
| 60 | Ryan Schmidt | SO | OG | 6-2 | 291 lbs | Missoula, MT |
| 61 | Cy Murer | SO | OG | 6-4 | 279 lbs | Big Fork, MT |
| 63 | Brad Waldhauser | FR | DE | 6-3 | 215 lbs | Worden, MT |
| 64 | Dan Girard | SO | C | 6-4 | 281 lbs | Yakima, WA |
| 65 | Nick Lebsock | FR | C | 6-1 | 239 lbs | Billings, MT |
| 66 | Brent Russum | JR | OT | 6-4 | 289 lbs | Lewiston, ID |
| 67 | Justin Townsend | FR | DT | 6-0 | 271 lbs | Dublin, CA |
| 69 | J.D. Quinn | JR | OG | 6-4 | 301 lbs | Garland, TX |
| 70 | David Arndt | FR | OL | 6-5 | 259 lbs | Highlands Ranch, CO |
| 71 | Cody Balogh | SR | OT | 6-7 | 328 lbs | Steilacoom, WA |
| 72 | Levi Horn | SO | OT | 6-7 | 305 lbs | Spokane, WA |
| 73 | John Dapper | FR | OG | 6-6 | 262 lbs | Kenmore, WA |
| 74 | Ryan Gustafson | SR | OL | 6-5 | 277 lbs | Billings, MT |
| 75 | Chris Dyk | SO | OT | 6-8 | 290 lbs | Dillon, MT |
| 76 | Erik Rasmussen | FR | OL | 6-5 | 283 lbs | Homer, AK |
| 77 | Terran Hillesland | SO | OG | 6-6 | 325 lbs | Sidney, MT |
| 78 | Eric Michel | SR | OG | 6-6 | 285 lbs | Billings, MT |
| 79 | Colin Dow | JR | C | 6-5 | 299 lbs | Billings, MT |
| 80 | Marc Mariani | SO | WR | 6-0 | 174 lbs | Havre, MT |
| 81 | Tyler Palmer | SO | WR | 6-3 | 213 lbs | Missoula, MT |
| 82 | Mike Ferriter | JR | WR | 6-1 | 210 lbs | Helena, MT |
| 83 | Lyle Brown | FR | WR | 5-9 | 164 lbs | Castle Rock, CO |
| 84 | Tony Kazmierczak | FR | WR | 6-2 | 191 lbs | Thompson Falls, MT |
| 85 | Bryan Riggs | SO | WR | 6-1 | 196 lbs | Spokane, WA |
| 86 | Nick Haynes | FR | DB | 5-10 | 170 lbs | Butte, MT |
| 87 | Dan Beaudin | SO | TE | 6-5 | 239 lbs | Trout Creek, MT |
| 88 | Steve Pfahler | SO | TE | 6-5 | 248 lbs | Frenchtown, MT |
| 89 | Rob Overton | FR | TE | 6-6 | 230 lbs | San Leandro, CA |
| 90 | Ryan Fetherston | FR | DE | 6-4 | 204 lbs | East Helena, MT |
| 91 | Mike Stadnyk | JR | DE | 6-4 | 247 lbs | Regina, Saskatchewan |
| 92 | George Mercer | SO | DE | 6-3 | 217 lbs | Libby, MT |
| 93 | Braydon Schilling | FR | DT | 6-2 | 241 lbs | Gillette, WY |
| 94 | Jackson Legerwood | SO | DT | 6-2 | 237 lbs | Fort Benton, MT |
| 95 | Carson Bender | FR | DE | 6-4 | 272 lbs | Deer Lodge, MT |
| 96 | Alex Verlanic | FR | DT | 6-3 | 267 lbs | Drummond, MT |
| 97 | Jesse Carlson | JR | DT | 6-3 | 272 lbs | Billings, MT |
| 98 | Kerry Mullan | SR | DT | 6-3 | 288 lbs | Stevensville, MT |
| 99 | Tyler Hobbs | SO | DE | 6-4 | 255 lbs | Spokane, WA |

GRIZ OFFENSE vs. TH



#3 Ryan Bagley

The senior from Great Falls is 25th in school history with 1,248 career rushing yards. Bagley had 725 last season alone. He also had a team-high 55 receptions in 2006, and had at least one catch in all 14 games.

Ryan Bagley 3 **WR**

Mike Ferriter 82 **WR**

Cody Balogh 71 **T**

Terran Hillesland 77 **G**

Lex Hilliard 38 **RB**

Cole Bergquist 14 **QB**

Colin Dow 79 **C**

Eric Michel 78 **G**

Brent Russum 66 **T**

Dan Beaudin 87 **TE**

Eric Allen 5 **WR**

GRIZ DEFENSE vs. TH

Quinton Jackson 34 **CB**

Colt Anderson 19 **SS**

Mike Stadnyk 91 **DE**

Loren Utterback 37 **LB**

Craig Mettler 50 **DT**

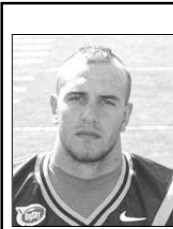
Kyle Ryan 46 **LB**

Torrey Thomas 32 **FS**

Kelly Kain 59 **DT**

Tyler Joyce 6 **LB**

Kroy Biermann 53 **DE**



#6 Tyler Joyce

The senior journalism major is a starter this year for his third season in a row. He has 241 career tackles, and has led the Griz in tackles the past two years. He has only missed one game in his career. In 2006, he led the team with 10 pass break-ups.

Chris Clark 21 **CB**

Thunderbird Defense

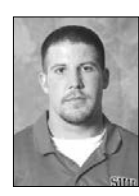


Southern Utah Thunderbirds

2006 Record 3-8 • 0-4 GWFC



Offense

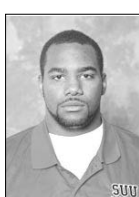


#8 Wes Marshall

Quarterback
6'1", 210 lbs, senior

Marshall ranked 30th in the nation in Division I-AA (now Football Championship Subdivision) in total yards per game, with 209.82. Marshall started all 11 games last year and six games in 2005. In 2006, he earned GWFC honorable mention by the coaches.

Defense



#22 D.J. Senter

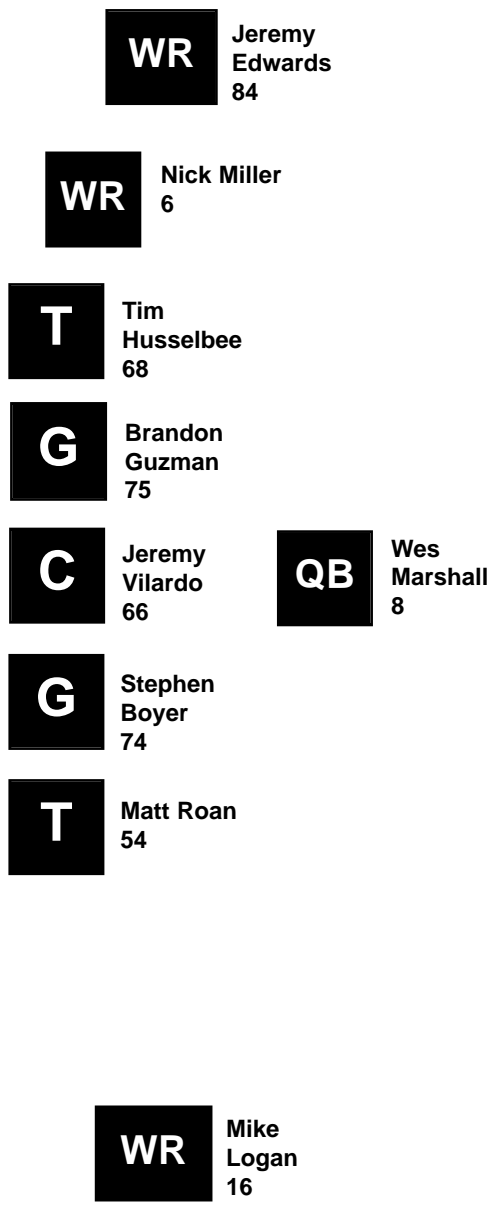
Safety
6'0, 210 lbs, junior

Senter is one of four returning all-conference players for the T-Birds. The team's leading tackler a year ago, he tallied seven tackles for loss and had five pass deflections. Montana's grizzled offensive line will be tested early with him trying to break through.

NUMERICAL ROSTER

| | | | | | | |
|----|-------------------|----|------|------|---------|----------------------|
| 1 | Jamar Lee | YR | RB | 5-9 | 200 lbs | Layton, UT |
| 2 | Chris Bonica | FR | DB | 5-10 | 175 lbs | Miami, FL |
| 3 | Tyson Poots | FR | WR | 6-3 | 200 lbs | Las Vegas, NV |
| 4 | Aaron Rodriguez | FR | WR | 6-3 | 200 lbs | Ojai, CA |
| 5 | Kyle Coop | JR | RB | 5-11 | 210 lbs | St. George, UT |
| 6 | Nick Miller | JR | WR | 5-9 | 175 lbs | Scottsdale, AZ |
| 7 | Brandon Godfrey | SO | QB | 6-1 | 180 lbs | Las Vegas, NV |
| 8 | Wes Marshall | SR | QB | 6-1 | 210 lbs | Minersville, UT |
| 9 | Mitch Meier | FR | WR | 6-3 | 200 lbs | Murray, UT |
| 10 | Stetson Peck | FR | QB | 6-1 | 180 lbs | South Jordan, UT |
| 11 | La'Var Porter | SR | LB | 6-1 | 230 lbs | Las Vegas, NV |
| 12 | DeWayne Lewis | JR | CB | 5-11 | 185 lbs | Denver, CO |
| 13 | Sean Taylor | FR | QB | 5-11 | 190 lbs | Sandy, UT |
| 14 | Cody Stone | JR | QB | 6-1 | 205 lbs | Bakersfield, CA |
| 15 | Joel Johnson | JR | TE | 6-4 | 245 lbs | Peoria, AZ |
| 16 | Mike Logan | JR | WR | 6-0 | 185 lbs | Las Vegas, NV |
| 17 | Derrick Brown | SR | CB | 6-1 | 185 lbs | Brigham City, UT |
| 18 | Craig Gritton | JR | WR | 5-11 | 175 lbs | West Jordan, UT |
| 19 | Ryan Higgins | SR | WR | 5-11 | 175 lbs | Livermore, CA |
| 20 | Dane Westmoreland | JR | WR | 6-2 | 200 lbs | South Jordan, UT |
| 21 | Archie Kovich | FR | CB | 6-0 | 175 lbs | Reno, NV |
| 22 | D.J. Senter | JR | S | 6-0 | 210 lbs | Las Vegas, NV |
| 23 | D.J. Lucchesi | SO | CB | 5-9 | 175 lbs | Panaca, NV |
| 24 | Chase Pendley | FR | S | 6-1 | 195 lbs | Sandy, UT |
| 25 | Austin Minefee | FR | RB | 5-10 | 195 lbs | Cedar City, UT |
| 26 | Jovan Jackson | SR | DB | 6-2 | 190 lbs | Phoenix, AZ |
| 28 | Johnny Sanchez | SR | RB | 5-9 | 195 lbs | Los Lunas, NM |
| 29 | Akeem Anifowoshe | FR | CB | 5-11 | 195 lbs | Las Vegas, NV |
| 30 | Tyler Peck | FR | S | 6-0 | 185 lbs | Herriman, UT |
| 31 | Tyler Moser | JR | LB | 6-0 | 225 lbs | Mesa, AZ |
| 32 | Robert Takeno | SO | LB | 5-11 | 222 lbs | Sandy, UT |
| 33 | Riley Marlow | FR | LB | 6-1 | 220 lbs | Draper, UT |
| 34 | Josh Fitisemanu | FR | RB | 5-11 | 215 lbs | Taylorville, UT |
| 35 | Robert Bala | SR | LB | 6-1 | 225 lbs | Oceanside, CA |
| 36 | Sam Bergen | FR | DB | 5-9 | 175 lbs | Salt Lake City, UT |
| 37 | Mike Kaniho | JR | S | 6-0 | 200 lbs | Lahaina, HI |
| 38 | Nick Snowden | JR | DB | 6-1 | 195 lbs | Fountain Valley, CA |
| 39 | Troy Osborne | JR | DB | 5-11 | 195 lbs | Peoria, AZ |
| 40 | Taylor Pendley | FR | LB | 6-1 | 225 lbs | Sandy, UT |
| 41 | Colin Pretlow | FR | RB | 6-0 | 170 lbs | Las Vegas, NV |
| 42 | T.J. Tabatabai | SR | LB | 6-2 | 240 lbs | Walnut, CA |
| 43 | Blake Fenn | FR | S | 6-1 | 200 lbs | Roosevelt, UT |
| 44 | Johan Rauge | JR | FB | 6-1 | 250 lbs | Tyreso, Sweden |
| 45 | Craig Hansen | SO | S | 5-10 | 190 lbs | Payson, UT |
| 46 | Jordan Lundstrom | FR | LB | 6-0 | 230 lbs | Midvale, UT |
| 47 | Garrett Blake | FR | RB | 6-1 | 240 lbs | St. George, UT |
| 48 | Brant Parker | FR | S | 6-0 | 185 lbs | St. George, UT |
| 49 | Steve Pulver | JR | K | 5-9 | 165 lbs | Salt Lake City, UT |
| 50 | Zack Samorano | JR | LB | 6-1 | 230 lbs | Tucson, AZ |
| 51 | Drew Rykert | SO | LB | 6-1 | 230 lbs | Cedar Hills, UT |
| 52 | Frankie Reeves | FR | LB | 6-1 | 220 lbs | Battle Mountain, NV |
| 53 | Jeff Janes | JR | OL | 6-2 | 260 lbs | Cedar City, UT |
| 54 | Matt Roan | SR | OL | 6-4 | 290 lbs | Dublin, VA |
| 55 | Kasidy Gooch | FR | LB | 6-0 | 215 lbs | West Valley City, UT |
| 56 | Devin Brooks | SO | DE | 6-3 | 235 lbs | Las Vegas, NV |
| 57 | Brady Arnold | FR | LB | 6-2 | 200 lbs | Roosevelt, UT |
| 59 | Miguel Paramo | SR | DE | 6-1 | 240 lbs | Shafter, CA |
| 61 | Patrick Kruse | FR | OL | 6-4 | 280 lbs | Park City, UT |
| 62 | Rich Giannelli | JR | OL | 6-4 | 290 lbs | Bakersfield, CA |
| 63 | A.J. Lewis | SO | OL | 6-2 | 260 lbs | Las Vegas, NV |
| 64 | Brady Miller | FR | OL | 6-0 | 260 lbs | Spanish Fork, UT |
| 65 | John Martinez | FR | OL | 6-4 | 275 lbs | Moorpark, CA |
| 66 | Jeremy Vilardo | JR | OL | 6-1 | 265 lbs | Las Vegas, NV |
| 67 | Jesse Kearsley | FR | DE | 6-2 | 250 lbs | Boise, ID |
| 68 | Tim Husselbee | SR | OL | 6-3 | 305 lbs | Salem, OR |
| 70 | Siva Tkalau | FR | DT | 6-1 | 330 lbs | Salt Lake City, UT |
| 71 | Ryan Woodmansee | FR | OL | 6-1 | 285 lbs | Salt Lake City, UT |
| 72 | Tim Whippis | FR | OL | 6-6 | 300 lbs | Eagle, ID |
| 73 | Ashton Steadman | FR | OL | 6-4 | 240 lbs | Sandy, UT |
| 74 | Stephen Boyer | SO | OL | 6-3 | 285 lbs | Kaysville, UT |
| 75 | Brandon Guzman | SR | OL | 6-0 | 270 lbs | Winslow, AZ |
| 76 | Joe Ellis | FR | OL | 6-6 | 280 lbs | Magna, UT |
| 77 | Cody Bolken | FR | OL | 6-3 | 270 lbs | Eagle, ID |
| 78 | Hector Perez | FR | OL | 6-2 | 285 lbs | Shafter, CA |
| 79 | Nick Garcia | SO | OL | 6-2 | 270 lbs | Clearfield, UT |
| 80 | Brett Sandall | SR | TE | 6-3 | 205 lbs | Sandy, UT |
| 81 | Zach McCoy | FR | WR | 6-2 | 180 lbs | Las Vegas, NV |
| 82 | Brigham Nielsen | FR | TE | 6-2 | 215 lbs | Salt Lake City, UT |
| 83 | Ryan Griffith | SO | WR | 6-0 | 220 lbs | Hemet, CA |
| 84 | Jeremy Edwards | SR | WR | 6-3 | 200 lbs | Key West, FL |
| 85 | Alex Furness | JR | WR | 6-1 | 205 lbs | Taylorville, UT |
| 86 | Mike Tagliafeire | FR | WR | 5-11 | 195 lbs | Las Vegas, NV |
| 87 | Phillip Jimenez | FR | WR | 6-0 | 185 lbs | Shafter, CA |
| 88 | Trevor Ward | SO | K/TE | 6-5 | 200 lbs | Ogden, UT |
| 89 | Thatcher Taylor | JR | WR | 5-11 | 180 lbs | Dillon, MT |
| 90 | Chad Westwood | SO | DL | 6-4 | 250 lbs | Cedar City, UT |
| 91 | Daniel Tuilagi | FR | DL | 6-0 | 265 lbs | Las Vegas, NV |
| 92 | Austin Curtis | JR | DT | 6-0 | 300 lbs | Layton, UT |
| 93 | Keleki Katoa | FR | DT | 5-10 | 300 lbs | Salt Lake City, UT |
| 94 | Trevor Cook | FR | DE | 6-4 | 245 lbs | American Fork, UT |
| 95 | Scott Larsen | SO | DL | 6-2 | 245 lbs | Farmington, UT |
| 96 | Cody Heinrich | FR | DE | 6-3 | 245 lbs | Las Vegas, NV |
| 97 | Jimmy Judd | SR | DE | 6-2 | 250 lbs | Salt Lake City, UT |
| 98 | Nick Witzmann | FR | DT | 6-0 | 270 lbs | Encinidas, CA |
| 99 | Aaron Fernandez | SR | DT | 6-2 | 285 lbs | Mesa, AZ |

Thunderbird Offense



#28 Johnny Sanchez
The team's leading returning rusher Sanchez showed an ability last season to break out for a big game. Matched up against the potent defense of McNeese State - a team Montana handled in the playoffs last year - Sanchez exploded for 161 yards.

RB Johnny Sanchez
28

FB Frankie Reeves
52

Big Sky teams travel for openers

Amber Kuehn
GAMEDAY KAIMIN

Four other Big Sky Conference teams take to the gridiron today to kick off their seasons, and three of them are playing at Football Bowl Subdivision schools. The Griz are the only Big Sky team playing at home today. Here's an outlook of the teams and what you can expect to see in each game:

Montana State at Texas A&M (6:05 p.m.)

The rival Bobcats head to College Station, Texas, to square off with the Aggies. The taste of sweet upset victory still lingers in many of their mouths, as MSU pulled off a season-opening win over I-A Colorado last year. But don't expect to see too many surprises in this one.

After an 8-5, 6-2 BSC finish in 2006, the Cats began making headlines for more than their play on the football field. The legal troubles surrounding the team eventually led to the ousting of head coach Mike Kramer. Now, with new head coach Rob Ash taking over, the 2007 season should be one of transition for Montana State.

Jack Rolovich, who started the final seven games of last season

after Cory Carpenter went down with an ankle injury, will finish where he left off. Ash named Rolovich the starting quarterback earlier this week.

Aaron Mason will likely dominate the running game again. Mason ran for 645 yards and had nine touchdowns last season.

"We're looking really good right now," Mason said. "I like the speed of our team."

Quarterback Stephen McGee returns for the Big 12 Conference Aggies. McGee set a school record for passing last season, throwing for 2,295 yards and rushing for 665 yards.

If the A&M offense doesn't give the Bobcat D enough trouble, the weather may factor in as a problem (it's been hot and humid there all week), and playing in front of 80,000-some people isn't something MSU is used to. But Mason said it's still an experience just to be able to play them.

"It's a dream," he said. "I used to watch those games on TV when I was younger, and never could have imagined I'd get to play them. I'm sure playing in front of that many people will be like something I've never experienced."

Carpenter may have received National Player of the Week honors last year when MSU upset

Colorado, but if Rolovich can pull off a win over the Aggies, he'd be deserving of a National Player of the Decade award. But Mason says not to count the Cats out just yet.

"Any given Saturday," he said. "It all depends on which team shows up."

Northern Colorado at Hawaii (6:05 p.m.)

The Bears are entering just their second year in the Big Sky, and coming off a season where they only won a single game. Dominic Breazeale returns to take the snaps, and Andy Birkel, a Nebraska transfer, will make his Big Sky Conference debut after sitting out last season with an injury. Other than that, the Bears are lacking talent and plagued by new injuries.

The defense, on the other hand, should be strong. Northern Colorado returns six starters, and Aaron Henderson has been touted one of the top corners in the league.

The coaches and media chose the Bears to finish last, and they have to begin their season at Aloha Stadium. Hello big blowout. Last year may have been a transition season for the Bears, but they need to prove they can play with the boys in the Big Sky

before I bet on them to beat a team in the Western Athletic Conference.

Hawaii is coming off one of the school's most successful football seasons ever and returns plenty of talent. Heisman Trophy candidate Colt Brennan is a quarterback who easily could have forgone his senior season to play in the NFL. Hawaii finished last season second behind Boise State, and tied a school record for most victories in a season with 11 wins.

Sacramento State at Fresno State (7:05 p.m.)

What's with all of the Big Sky teams playing WAC opponents? The Hornets haven't beaten the Griz in 13 attempts, so I'm not counting on them to defeat the Bulldogs of Fresno State. Sacramento State struggled some last year, going 4-7, 4-4 in the conference. The Hornets have a new coach in Marshall Sperbeck, and were picked to finish seventh by coaches and media.

Fresno State coach Pat Hill has a banged-up team, having lost key starters to injuries suffered in past scrimmages. Injuries and inexperience are coupled with off-the-field concerns. Linebacker Quadir Brown was suspended for the season opener after being charged with vandalism and tres-

passing, and defensive end Chris Lewis was suspended for the semester, facing a possible probation violation after being arrested on suspicion of theft.

Last season, the Bulldogs posted a 4-8 record, their worst since 1978.

Portland State at McNeese State (7:05 p.m.)

I am choosing this as the game to watch today, as it likely could be a close one and features two key Football Championship Subdivision teams.

New coach Jerry Glanville is forced to replace eight starters on last year's Portland State defense, which led the Big Sky in seven categories, including turnover margin and sacks per game. The Vikings were chosen to finish second behind the Griz.

McNeese State returns Southland Conference Player of the Year Steven Whitehead at running back, and SLC Freshman of the Year Derrick Forroux is back at quarterback. Whitehead enters the 2007 season with 3,154 all-purpose yards, but the Griz were able to stop him in the playoffs last season in a 31-6 thumping. Perhaps Portland State can find a solution for this team with a ton of talent.

Griz runner believed in himself when others didn't

Katie Michel
GAMEDAY KAIMIN

For cross country runner Duncan Hendrick, running is like breathing. It may not come easy to him, but he couldn't live his life without it.

When he was a baby, at just 18 months old, asthma constricted his airway forcing him to undergo nebulizer treatments anywhere from three to eight times a day. A mist of medication would enter his lungs as he struggled for a breath of fresh air that was so essential to his existence.

Now a senior ready to complete his last seasons of cross country and track and field, running has been the best medicine of all by reducing the severity of his asthma, allowing him to breathe easier.

"Without running I wouldn't be the same person I am today," Hendrick said. "It's shaped my character."

Hendrick, who comes from a family of runners, has been running competitively since seventh grade. A mere 70 pounds at the age of 13, Hendrick was not a standout athlete, partially because of the asthma that constricted him.

"It hindered a lot of his endurance activity," said Daniel Hendrick, Duncan's father.

"Then he found if he could just run through it, he could do it. It came from a belief in himself. He just went out and worked at it so



Tim Kupsick/GameDay Kaimin
Duncan Hendrick's goal is to be ranked in All Big Sky and one of the top three runners on the Grizzly cross country team this year.

he could be good at it."

Hendrick stuck with it, and hoped to someday run for a Division I school, despite a lack of faith by his coaches and teammates. He thought differently.

"I started training harder because I wanted that," Hendrick said. "You have to be self-motivated. I could tell in high school people (doubted) I would get into a D-I school. I had times where I questioned whether I could get better but you have to push through those."

Last season at the Montana Open, Hendrick placed first with a 6K career best of 19:02, an accomplishment that he had fallen short of in past races. Hendrick often struggles not because of

asthma or sore muscles, but because of his mind.

"Sometimes I mentally crash during good races. For most people it's the mental aspect that holds them back," Hendrick said.

In the last cross country season of his college career, Hendrick said his biggest goal is to stay strong mentally, even when he isn't physically.

"You've got to look at the positive things," he said. "Accept the pain because it's supposed to be hard. Every race I come in with a positive attitude."

As the lone senior on the team, Hendrick wants to set the pace and show his improvement by having his best season to date.

"He's gotten stronger and he's

become more of a leader," said head coach Tom Raunig. "Sometimes he's run down in the season because he is such a hard worker."

Peaking too soon has plagued Hendrick's past seasons and prevented him from saving his best for last, something that Hendrick is looking to change.

"I'm focusing on training smart and training hard. This season should be different" Hendrick said. "I'd like to leave my last season without having any doubts about it."

Hendrick's days revolve around training with all other activities fitting in between. When he isn't racking up more than eight miles a day through workouts, circuit training, jogs and form drills, he is studying to finish his degree in

biology with the hopes of going to medical or graduate school.

"I just try to fit in stuff whenever I can," he said.

No regrets and a successful season are all Hendrick wants, something his father Daniel knew might not have been possible without his son's determination to overcome his asthma.

"The reality is he didn't put any limits on himself," Daniel Hendrick said. "For me, I'm just happy he's competing."

In the next step forward in his life, Hendrick said that although his college running career will quickly come to an end, his love and appreciation for the sport that gave him relief from his asthma will never stop.

"I can't see myself without running."

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Where are they now: Tuff Harris

Jake Grilley
GAMEDAY KAIMIN

Fans across the National Football League agree that Arrowhead Stadium, home to the Kansas City Chiefs, is one of the loudest and toughest places to play a football game.

When Tuff Harris stepped on the field at Arrowhead for his second preseason game as a Miami Dolphin, even with over 70,000 Chiefs fans rooting against him, the rowdy football atmosphere in Kansas City must have felt a little like home.

"Playing for Montana prepared me well to play at this level," Harris said. "Griz Nation is up there. NFL fans are good, but they don't get much better than Griz fans."

Harris said as a Griz he learned how to mentally and physically ready himself as a football player and developed a strong work ethic that has helped him succeed at such a high level.

Playing for Montana, however, didn't prepare Harris for every aspect of the NFL.

"The biggest difference is that size and speed of the game is so much faster and quicker," Harris said. "Everything happens a fraction of a second sooner than it did in college."

Harris, a four-year defensive and special teams standout at Montana, joined the Dolphins as an undrafted free agent last spring, but he still isn't quite

accustomed to his new uniform. Running on to the field in the teal and orange of the Dolphins and not the maroon and silver of the Grizzlies has taken some getting used to, Harris said.

But he isn't letting the color of his jersey stand in the way of his play. Harris has amassed nine tackles, eight of them solo and one pass deflection in three preseason season games with the Dolphins.

Harris found one series particularly rewarding for Montana football during the Dolphins' first preseason game against the Jacksonville Jaguars.

At cornerback, Harris lined up against Jacksonville wide receiver and former Grizzly Jimmy Farris.

"Not many Montana players make it (to the NFL)," Harris said. "For whatever reason they are often looked over, but Montana players have the talent to play at this level."

Senior running back and former teammate Lex Hilliard praised Harris' achievements.

"Any of these guys playing in the league puts Montana football on the map," Hilliard said. "(Montana has) talent year after year. So many guys can make (the transition to the NFL)."

Harris said being an NFL player is isn't much different than being a collegiate athlete, but every once in a while he's reminded just how far he has



Former UM cornerback Tuff Harris tries to corral a Eastern Washington player in a October 15, 2005 game. Harris played in three preseason games for the Miami Dolphins this season. Tim Kupsick/GameDay Kaimin

come in his football career.

"I haven't really been star struck," Harris said. "But eating breakfast with guys like Trent Green and seeing some of these players, it makes me realize where I am."

Even though Harris has spent his summer in South Florida, he still keeps tabs on what is happening back home.

Harris stays in contact with former coaches, players, friends and a few fans that let him know

what is going on with the Grizzlies and how things are back home.

Harris has advice for those who are lucky enough to still wear maroon and silver.

"Enjoy being part of Griz Nation, those are times you will cherish," Harris said. "Keep it up and work hard, anyone can make it."

Harris believes he made it to where he is today by not jeopardizing his dreams.

"I made a lot of right decisions, I wasn't perfect, but making good decisions helped me fulfill this dream of mine," he said.

Harris' dream still isn't complete. Final cuts – trimming down the Miami roster to 53 players – will occur this weekend, something that Harris doesn't think about.

"I keep it out of mind," Harris said. "I am not looking too far ahead. I am still living in a dorm, if I do make the roster, I will have to find an apartment in a hurry."

As a young boy growing up in Montana, Harris one day dreamed of playing in the NFL.

"Lots of people dream about it," Harris said. "Reality is staring me right in the face."

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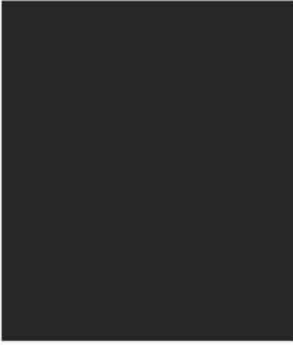
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