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Big Sky should be close this year

University of Montana--Missoula. Office of University Relations

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BIG SKY SHOULD
BE CLOSE THIS YEAR

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MISSOULA---



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While Montana's 1-4 basketball record is not impressive, it is not that bad considering that Big Sky teams have only won ten games to date.

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An Associated Press cage roundup shows that Big Sky Conference teams have emerged victorious only ten times in the last 34 contests.

Weber State, defending Conference champions, heads the list with four wins in six tries, while the Idaho schools show 2-3 markings. Montana is third in the win-loss column followed by Gonzaga, 1-6, and Montana State, 0-6.

Part of the reason for the poor conference record is that the six member teams are playing some of the toughest competition in the country.

The Grizzlies have played Colorado State, Oregon, Washington State, considered by sports writers as better than average NCAA teams. Montana has yet to face a tough Utah, undefeated Puget Sound, 6-0, and nationally ranked Washington.

The Tip's cross state rival, Montana State hasn't recorded a victory in six outings, but have faced Washington, Seattle University, Tennessee and Yale for starters.

Weber State wound up the season with a 25-2 record in 1968-69 and have already dropped two games of six in 1969-70. However, in both games the Wildcats were without star Willie Sojourner, 6-8 All American. Weber lost to Arizona State and Southern Colorado.

Idaho State, 2-3, ran into some toughies east of the divide. The Bengals lost to Creighton, Purdue and Butler, all three big name foes.

The Vandals of Idaho had its troubles with Washington's Huskies, Washington State and Seattle Pacific.

Coach Bob Cope said, what this amounts to is that Big Sky teams are going to be hungry when the conference schedule rolls around in January.

They (Big Sky teams) are learning the hard way this season," Cope said. "Any time you come out on the short end of the scoreboard, you learn the hard way, and we certainly are getting a good education.

"Our kids are coming around," the UM mentor said. "We hope that by the time conference play begins we'll have our troubles in hand."

One thing for sure, he said, from the looks of the records after 34 games, no team in the conference is out of the running. "We're going to be right in there with them (Big Sky teams)--we're hungry too!"

The Tipsface Utah Friday, December 26 in Salt Lake City and then are idle until a January 10th date with Boise State in Missoula. ###