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Montana Kaimin, August 31-September 6, 2016

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RACING TO RIO

UM alum Megan Fisher to compete in her second Paralympic Games

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KAIMIN EDITORIAL

Main Hall, you can do much better

By Editorial staff editor@montanakaimin.com

Contrary to popular belief, the Kaimin does not have it out for campus authority. While we have certainly had harsh words for Main Hall in the past, it’s not simply shit-talking for the sake of it. The job of any journalist is to hold those in power accountable. As student journalists, our focus is even more immediate.

We work in the service of students and faculty, and it is no surprise that many of them have felt wronged by the events of the last several years. A mix of circumstance and poor managerial decision-making led to extensive layoffs, plummeting enrollment and continued failure to properly handle sexual assault on campus. All of which prompted extraordinary public outcry. The news that certain higher-ups were receiving bonuses and excellence awards in the midst of all this only made the hardships weigh heavier.

Those instances only scratch the surface. But rather than continue to reflect on the wrongs of the last several years, the Kaimin is taking this opportunity to start off on a different foot. We genuinely believe that the University of Montana can do better, and is more than capable of recovering.

Main Hall’s own staff turnover presents them with a new opportunity to rectify the damage of the last several years. We want to encourage them to grasp the proverbial bull by the horns. That means an overhaul of campus culture will come not just from a change in action by President Royce Engstrom, but forward thinking from the new higher-ups. That means Beverly Edmond, interim provost. It means Mario Schulze, vice president for integrated communications.

For too long, the University of Montana has operated under the ideas of the old guard. Regressive ideas got us where we are now — we don’t have the patience, or money, for more of the same. Neither prospective students nor the current student body will accept leadership that deems sexual assault in broad daylight unworthy of a campus alert, or offers little in the way of explanation for why our favorite professors suddenly faced the ax.

The new leadership has a real opportunity to instigate change. The hand they’ve been dealt is unfortunate, yes, but not insurmountable. Expectations are high, but not unreasonable. Nobody is expecting enrollment to skyrocket overnight. But we need to see steps toward improvement.

For too long, campus leadership has floundered in bureaucracy and politicking. That system may have been effective years ago, but presently it’s a recipe for sputtering education and a disenfranchised student body. The new leadership is in a position to prove that the needs of students and faculty come before their own.

Check out our coverage of Fitz and the Tantrums online at montanakaimin.com

Lacey Young / @laceyyoung97 Noelle Scaggs performs onstage with her band Fitz and the Tantrums at the Big Sky Brewing Company in Missoula on Aug. 28, 2016.
KAIMIN COLUMN

Online comments allow free speech for outlaws

Browsing the comments on sites like YouTube, Fox News and local newspapers can be a sobering experience. It can also be an extremely frustrating one. It seems more likely to come across someone who believes Harambe was an inside job than someone who knows the difference between NAFTA and NATO.

In an internet-centric culture that increasingly values self-affirmation over self-analysis, a growing list of major media outlets are dropping the comments section from their sites. But, with the divisiveness of the current political atmosphere, a forum for unhindered discussion is more necessary than ever.

The shift from the comment section has garnered mixed reactions. National Public Radio recently ceased the discussion, officially shutting the service down on August 23. Although NPR will be dropping the comments from its site, Montana Public Radio has kept the feature available. Josh Burnham, the social media and web editor at MPRF identifies himself as a “fan of comment sections,” but sees a need for moderation.

“All MTPR we try to create an environment that isn’t conducive to trolls and bomb throwers,” Burnham said. “We try to open channels for people to say something constructive.”

Internet comment sections can be a dangerous frontier for the faint of heart; one seemingly populated by far more bandits than vigilantes. Anyone who has ventured into the dark depths of a comment section has seen the turmoil, and probably had their mother insulted. But, if one can wade past the trolls, real, insightful conversations can be found.

It could be argued that the nearly ubiquitous use of social media provides a sufficient space for public discourse, while also providing a degree of accountability to users’ antics. However, pushing reader response to social media alone is not without complications.

Commenting on an article anonymously allows people to provoke one another without fear of repercussion. It also allows for an unstifled opportunity to express thoughts that could damage both personal and professional relationships. Holding commenters accountable for threats or racism is good, but that doesn’t mean they should be held accountable to their Aunt Sally on Facebook for their political beliefs.

Meanwhile, Facebook and Google are doing more to feed us only what we want to hear and see. Using algorithms to fill our internet experience with like-minded viewpoints disallows the opportunity to form more wholesome views.

A vibrant comment section can at times seem like a brawl between the faceless and the factless, but the exchanges can have profound impact. Sarah Sikes, a frequent comment poster on NPR, said in a post on NPR’s Facebook page that the online community would be suffering a sore loss.

“I will miss the community there very much,” she said. “Even the members who only came to light fires under people often ended up shaping the conversation in a way that helped me to think harder about the topic at hand.”

Depriving readers of this opportunity to peer into society’s broader consciousness will only allow us to stagnate into our own beliefs, creating deeper divides and stronger tension. We need this looking glass into ourselves, which the comments can provide, in order to engage and grow.
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**Electric buses to join UDASH fleet**

By Shae Warren
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The University of Montana will be introducing two zero-emission battery-electric buses to its UDASH fleet later this semester as part of an ASUM project geared toward providing sustainable campus transportation.

The student board has long wanted to move away from diesel-emitting buses and toward something more sustainable.

Jordan Hess, director of the ASUM Office of Transportation, said the idea for the project has gotten a lot of positive feedback.

“It’s innovative, and it’s new,” Hess said. “ASUM is able to be more nimble than a lot of agencies with this project. Internally, we have had a lot of good reactions from ASUM and the student body.”

The board spent about 15 months researching the benefits of various sustainable buses and their decision to go electric. During this period, they also invited electric bus vendors to come to Missoula.

After months of research, ASUM decided to go with a company called Protera, and from there they were able to custom build the new buses to fit their vision.

The buses have been purposefully built from the ground up to be as sustainable as possible, according to Hess. The frames are made of carbon fiber, making them lighter than most transit buses.

Instead of charging overnight, the buses will charge on their usual route each time they reach the Music Building, where the charging station is located. The charging station will connect to the bus automatically when it is in position, charge for a few minutes as the bus idles and then the bus will be suitably charged for another trip.

Funding for the project consists of existing grants for the project and some seed money granted by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality. This grant guarantees that the two oldest buses in the UDASH fleet will be recycled after they are replaced by the electric buses.

Facility Services project manager Brian Kerns is excited about the project and hopes that the student body will take advantage of the new buses. He added that, if the project is successful, ASUM hopes to one day replace all the buses in its fleet with more sustainable ones.

According to Hess, ASUM hopes to have the buses and the charging station running and functioning by late October.

**Mansfield Library cuts collection, sets sights on cloud-based system**

By Lucy Tompkins
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After a difficult year of budget cuts and staff reductions, the Mansfield Library is working to implement new ways to serve students and expand its resources.

Over the past three years, the library’s budget has been reduced by nearly $1.5 million. As a result, the library lost 700 print serial subscriptions, 33 e-journals, 11 databases and e-journal packages, two e-book packages (with over 100,000 titles) and two microfilm subscriptions.

According to a University Library Committee resolution from May 2016, humanities and social sciences were subjects that were hit the hardest.

Dean of Libraries Shali Zhang said library staff will find alternative ways to provide resources to students.

“We want to do everything to make sure that even if we don’t have the materials,” Zhang said, “that materials can be found elsewhere — through interlibrary loans, or through collaborative collection development, like joining together with other libraries.”

Zhang said that while interlibrary loans may be slower to process given the library’s staff reductions, they will be prioritizing UM student requests over those of other libraries.

“We just want to make sure our new students and faculty feel that they can still request whatever they need,” Zhang said. “We will do everything.”

Meradeth Snow, assistant professor of anthropology and member of the University Library Committee, said some of her students have already had trouble finding the sources they need for assignments.

“A lot of the social science and humanities classes require students to have as many resources as they can, and the library is the place to go,” Snow said. “I’ve definitely had students come to me and ask why they can’t access certain articles.”

Snow said she herself has had trouble accessing resources for research.

“That is an issue when you have a lot of faculty here that use those programs,” she said.

For now, interlibrary loans may be the best solution for students who need resources that the library can’t otherwise provide. But a new system set to launch in December will hopefully expand UM’s access to materials and facilitate the sharing of resources among Montana libraries.

Head of Technology and Systems Services John Greer is spearheading the project, which involves switching from the current integrated library system to a cloud-based system. This will integrate management for all of the library’s electronic materials, which is where the majority of the library’s money is currently spent, Greer said.

“We are doing it as a statewide project with 17 academic libraries across the state of Montana,” he said. “So all of us will be in one large system together, which makes it easier for us to share resources between the various schools, share expertise between the schools and hopefully reduce the total cost of library materials.”

The new system, called Alma, will immediately make the print materials of all 17 participating libraries available to UM students, but electronic resources are trickier to share, Greer said. Because electronic resources are license-based, the school will have to negotiate with vendors.

Zhang said she hopes these negotiations can be finished by January or February, which will make some additional electronic resource packages available to UM students.

The new system is also an innovative way to save money. Because the cost of the new technology is shared between 17 schools, UM’s individual cost will be lower than its total cost now, according to Greer.

“Consortial purchasing has become more and more common because of the ability to leverage the power of many,” Greer said.

Even with the launch of the new system in sight, the library will still be making cuts to its collection this fall. Zhang said they are in the process of identifying which resources have a high cost and low usage, and they will eliminate those first. Zhang said social sciences and humanities should not be disproportionately affected because journals for those disciplines are relatively cheap.

Meeting the needs of students is the library’s main priority, she said.

“I feel sorry for the budget situation,” Zhang said. “I only wish that we could provide more things to students. For example, students asked for the library to be open 24 hours, and we just don’t have those resources. But we want to make sure that those essential services and essential collections are there to serve our students.”
Student groups call for greater access to gender-neutral bathrooms

By Abby Lynes
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The Women’s Resource Center and UM Lambda have been in talks over the past year to get more gender-neutral bathrooms on campus, including multi-stall restrooms.

Fifteen buildings and all the residence halls on campus have gender-neutral restrooms, but they can often be hard to find or far away from students’ classes, according to Lambda President Mason O’Kiernan.

Students who identify as trans or outside of the traditional gender binary may not feel safe in gendered restrooms, O’Kiernan told the Kaimin in a message. 

“And as our current climate shows, they often are not,” he said.

“It’s important to acknowledge that there are more than two genders, and to not vilify those who do not conform to Western societies cultural ‘standards’ by separating them from the ‘norm,’” O’Kiernan said.

A WRC intern drafted a proposal for gender-neutral bathrooms last semester. It would be an easy and inexpensive fix, WRC Director Jenny Stoneking said.

“Our proposal isn’t necessarily asking for funding,” she said. “It’s asking to replace some signs.”

The proposal would also request that any new buildings built on campus include gender-neutral bathrooms. Stoneking said she’s hoping an intern will take on the proposal as a project this semester to help bring it to fruition. The WRC will be collecting signatures in support of the proposal at Welcome Feast.

There will also be a working group this fall to increase trans inclusivity on campus, Dean of Students Rhondie Voorhees said.

“There’s definitely a need for us as a campus to take a bigger, more systematic look at what we’re offering,” she said.

The group will address issues like making housing more trans-friendly, updating trans students’ names and pronouns used on documents, and increasing availability of gender-neutral bathrooms.

“That is definitely a top priority this coming year,” Voorhees said.

Increasing trans inclusivity by creating more gender-neutral bathrooms will give the University a chance to show its support for the queer community in the upcoming school year, O’Kiernan said.

“Taking a stand against the hatred and bigotry of those who would erase the ‘other’ sends a statement that the University stands with the LGBTQIA community and will not tolerate discrimination,” he said.
T
here is no gun; there is no buzzer. Megan Fisher is perched on her black Argon bike on the starting ramp, an official holding the back tire in place. Competitors are sent off at one-minute intervals. Fisher will be second from last, with the defending gold medalist behind her. The official began the five-second countdown on his fingers, turning his hand each time a second passed. When there were no fingers left, her tire was released and Fisher rolled down the ramp.

Four years later, Fisher can still chart her London Paralympic gold medal race in her head, chronicling every turn, thinking over all her strategies. She still knows where she accelerated and which side of the road was smoothest.

Since London, Fisher has had her eye on another Paralympic medal — this time in Rio, racing at Copacabana Beach. Fisher ships off to Rio on Sept. 2. She will race four times during the two-week games. The course will be challenging, due to its even terrain, where the small-framed Fisher won't have a physical advantage. She's been training constantly with rides up and down Pattee Canyon and workouts in the Bitterroot. The lesser-known of the Olympic Games, the Paralympic trials were held in Charlotte, North Carolina, this July. Fisher qualified for the U.S. team, finishing the hilly course six seconds after current world champion, Shawn Morelli.

Morelli is Fisher's biggest competition in Rio. She has what Fisher calls “diesel power,” a taller stature that will help Morelli power across Copacabana's flat surface.

Still, the trials didn't stand in the way of Fisher's dreams of a second Paralympic bid. Fisher received a phone call from U.S. Paralympic Cycling High Performance Director Ian Lawless in April to congratulate her. Fisher's athletic prowess didn't start in the saddle. It started on the tennis court, where she learned the importance of hard work, how to be a teammate and when to push. It was tennis that brought her back to the athletic world after she lost her best friend and foot in a car crash in 2002. Cycling came later.

Fisher grew up on a farm in Canada near Calgary, Alberta. As an only child, she was shy growing up, spending time with horses, cows and dogs instead of other children. When she was three, her parents separated. Fisher moved to Hinsdale, Illinois, 18 miles southwest of Chicago, with her mom, Sara Fisher. Fisher's dad split his time between Canada and the Philippines, where his other family lives.

Fisher and her mother were broke, and Fisher had little choice but to move in with her parents to save money. She and Fisher spent three years there. Fisher began working at a tennis club in the area to get back into the American economy. She had worked in banking in Canada.

One day that same year, Fisher picked up her daughter from day care with Fisher's first tennis racket waiting in the car. It was silver-framed, with white strings and a blue grip, “Dunlop” stenciled in blue across it.

Fisher played all the time. Fisher inherited that love, starting off in peewee tennis with big foam balls, working her way up to regulation balls.

“Tennis makes my heart pitter-patter,” she said. “A new can of tennis balls still smells like Christmas to me.”

A shy girl with buck teeth and glasses, Fisher spent summers at the farm in Canada with her dad's parents. She spent days in the hayloft with the animals. She returned to Chicago when it came time for school, but Fisher didn't connect with the kids there. Tennis and sports were an opportunity to make friends.

Fisher moved into high school, playing tennis, basketball and softball. She was fast and had flashes of brilliance but wasn't at the top of the tennis ladder. She loved the sport but didn't give all her time to the game.

Sara Jackson was the top of the top. She played tennis at University of Illinois, Chicago. At one point, she held the school record for most wins. Fisher met Jackson in 1999 at the Hinsdale Racquet Club during high school, and they became friends. Fisher set out on her own college career soon afterward, but the two kept in touch.

When it came time to pick a college, Fisher bought a university guide and started underlining programs that interested her. Schools with the most underlines became top contenders, with the University of Montana in Missouri as her first choice.

Molly Blair was a junior on the Griz tennis team when coaches assigned Fisher, a walk-on freshman, as her doubles partner. Fisher was mellow and reserved, and she struggled to connect with most of her teammates. But Blair and Fisher worked well together, both being solid players with the ability to make things happen on the court.

In the winter, Blair picked Fisher up for midnight practice, then met her and the rest of the team for 7 a.m. runs. Fisher's freshman year passed in a blur of wildlife biology classes, Griz burritos and practice. She was excited to go home to Chicago for the summer and teach tennis lessons at a local club.

Sara Jackson taught at the club too, and the two women...
became even better friends. They had a golden summer, spending their days teaching kids to love the game and their nights eating Jackson’s cooking concoctions. Playing on the sun-warmed courts with Jackson made Fisher the happiest she had ever been. Jackson had graduated from University of Illinois, Chicago with a degree in psychology and was accepted into UM’s English teaching master’s program for the fall. She and Fisher decided to share an apartment. They would use the week between sessions to drive to Missoula, sign a lease and drop some stuff off.

They set out on June 29, 2002 and spent the night in Mitchell, South Dakota. The next morning, they ate at Perkins and toured the Corn Palace, a tourist trap made of corn and little else.

They got back on I-90 with Jackson driving and Fisher nodding off. Their car rolled eight times, the wreck so bad emergency responders didn’t think anyone had survived. The front half of Fisher’s left foot was ripped off, split like a deck of cards. Some of her bones were left at the scene. She had severe head trauma.

Fisher was life-flighted to Rapid City Regional Hospital. The pilot later told Fisher her condition was as bad as men he saw in Vietnam. Her mom chartered a jet from Chicago because she wasn’t sure Fisher would live.

She woke up a week later without a foot. They told her Jackson was dead. The news sunk in slowly, because she was passing in and out of consciousness like a flickering light switch. She knew her foot was gone, but she couldn’t think much past that. With her friend gone, there was little room for self-pity. Fisher was lucky to be alive.

As her condition improved, the hospital moved her from the ICU to the main floor and eventually to the orthopedic floor. She bounced around, in and out of surgery. Doctors had drilled a hole in her head to relieve pressure and drain fluid. Her brain had acted like a ping pong ball, bouncing between the front and back of her skull. The trauma to her right frontal lobe was so extensive it altered her personality. Shy, reserved Fisher was no more. Outgoing and upbeat Fisher emerged. She went through multiple reconstructive surgeries on her foot. She was life-flighted back to Chicago because she couldn’t sit in a car or commercial airplane.

School and tennis started without her in Missoula. Blair remembers the tennis coaches briefly mentioning Fisher’s accident and that she wouldn’t be rejoining them for the season. Little else was said or done. It would be two years before Blair reconnected with a more outgoing Fisher.

Rehab and sitting on the couch started for Fisher in Chicago. She was homebound, a pin holding her leg together. Her mom was her constant companion, source of food, bathroom breaks and care. They got walkie-talkies, Fisher referring to Fisher as “Mother Duck” on the airwaves.

She was fitted with a prosthesis. It was like a ski boot, only fitted to her leg and with less padding. The days passed attending physical therapy sessions, where she learned to walk again and regain her balance and strength.

The pause button was hit on Fisher’s life. The days idled by vacantly. She missed tennis, especially the people she knew in that world. She was never diagnosed with depression, but she was deeply unhappy. In December, another mother duck entered Fisher’s life — one who wasn’t summoned over a walkie-talkie, one who came unbidden but made all the difference.
Three months after her second surgery, Fisher was still on crutches. She remembers the first day completely off them. It was fall of her junior year, and the day was sunny. The lifelong athlete was itching to resume activity and stopped at a used bike gear sale. The price was right.

She found used shorts, a jersey and shoes for $15. The man holding the sale even got a butter knife and jimmed her prosthetic foot into the bike shoes. The previous owner had Achilles tendinitis and cut out part of the heel. The increased leverage was ideal for Fisher’s inflexible foot. The idea to try biking was planted, but it would be a while before Fisher realized her potential or even bought a bike.

The next spring, she enlisted a friend on the cycling team to go with her and check out a used mountain bike. It was a gray Cannondale F-600 with a single head shock and black grips. She bought it for $500 and proceeded to ride the bike to distress. She biked trails in Missoula and competed in a 24-hour race, but she was self-conscious and had a lot to learn. The first time she practiced track stands, a trick to stay upright on a bike while standing still, she fell, puncturing her prosthesis.

Eleven months after her second surgery, in 2004, Fisher signed up for her first triathlon without ever swimming 1,000 yards, running a 5K, or biking 20 km before. She borrowed a friend’s road bike and raced with a goal to not finish last. Six people finished after her.

The feeling wouldn’t last for Fisher. She was on her way to domination.

Fisher had always held triathletes and rugby players to a high standard. They were so tough. After her first triathlon, she held herself to a higher standard, her accident forcing her to stop selling herself short. Before the accident, she thought she couldn’t do a triathlon on two legs. She had just done it with one. So Fisher joined the UM rugby team, bought a road bike and continued racing in triathlons.

She changed her major to athletic training, something she had always been interested in but never thought she was smart enough to study. Her time in the hospital and rehab reinforced her passion. The program was hard, requiring many hours of standing and walking, but Fisher made it work. She rebuilt her life. A small insurance claim from the accident gave her $22,000 — an amount to help pay the $22,000 for a prosthesis.

“I traded my left foot for a down payment on a house. It sucks. I kind of hate my house for it. I would much rather have my left foot,” she said. “I would much rather have Sara.”

The next winter, Fisher struggled with pain. Doctors couldn’t tell her why. Her border collie, Betsy, needed walks. Fisher gradually reduced the length as the task grew more painful. Soon she stopped walking altogether, her prosthesis too painful to wear. She was constantly on crutches or wheelchair-bound. Doctors couldn’t figure out what was wrong, telling her she would never walk again. Betsy trained as a mobility dog, able to fetch Fisher’s leg, pull her wheelchair and turn on lights.

She spent her days as a trainer for the Griz cross country and track teams, but it was difficult to empathize with temporary injuries. Athletes complained when an injury prevented them from participating for several days, but they would recover. Fisher struggled to come to terms with the reality of never walking again.

She spent the weekend before her college graduation in a Chicago prosthetist’s lab. J. Angelico, her old prosthetist, brought his son in, and the two made her a new prosthesis. It still hurt, but at least she could walk. More specifically, she could walk across the stage at graduation. In May 2006, she used her crutches to get to the stage, handed them off to a hobble across, then picked them back up on the other side.

Gradually, the pain lessened and she got back into triathlons and mountain biking.

Casey Campbell met Fisher in the fall of 2008 at UM, when Campbell was a freshman and Fisher was preparing to apply for physical therapy school. They mountain biked all around Missoula together. One Saturday, they rolled up to find the Blue Mountain parking lot packed. Fisher slipped her handicap decal onto the mirror, saying to Campbell, “We’re just gonna put the blue man up.” The two parked, then headed out to the trails, Fisher leading the whole way.

Campbell waited months after meeting Fisher to ask what had happened to her leg. Fisher told her it got caught between the springs in a trampoline and had to be removed. That’s why people put pads on the springs now, she joked.

It was typical — Fisher finds the humor in most things. Campbell has seen Fisher dupe more people with different leg loss stories. There is a demand for them because people ask a lot. Fisher handles herself well in the moment, answering the same questions time and again. It’s a theme in Fisher’s life, working well with what she has.

Fisher worked a variety of jobs from 2008 to 2011 at Missoula Bike Works, as a UM adjunct instructor and in physical therapy clinics around town. She did her first Xterra triathlon, an extreme, off-road competition, in Bozeman in 2008. She later won the national and world titles for the challenged athlete class. She won again in 2009. She also won the 2009 para-triathlon championships. Her medals and awards kept stacking up, but so did the bills.

By now, she was an international para-triathlon champion, but competing was expensive, and Fisher had to pay her own way. So in 2009, she got into para-cycling, a sport with more funding as a branch of the Olympic committee. In 2011, she earned a spot on the national para-cycling team. Although her racing career was going well, her right hip started hurting after years of overcompensating. It was hip flexor tendinitis. She would recover, but the injury made her realize she needed a career path more stable than pro cycling.

That winter, she applied and was accepted...
to University of Washington's physical therapy school. Her riding improved, and chances of her competing in the 2012 London Paralympic Games were promising.

The first year at UW and the summer following was a grueling contest of training for the games and studying for classes. Fisher found a supportive Seattle biking group to train with, and her professors worked with her training schedule.

She spent the summer in Colorado Springs completing her clinical internship. After biking to work, Fisher spent 10 hours a day in the clinic, hurried home for a cafeteria dinner, then rode her bike on a trainer until 11 p.m. She spent weekends training at a Los Angeles velodrome, a horizontally inclined track built for cycling. She flew down on Friday and back Sunday night.

But it was all worth it. At the Paralympic time trials in August 2012, Fisher qualified for four races in the London Games.

The 12-person Team USA arrived in Newport, Wales, two weeks early to get acclimated to the weather and altitude. They then moved into the Olympic Village in London. The cafeteria was Fisher's favorite part, where athletes could eat all they wanted for free. There was food from all over the world. Fisher took a sample from every country. A McDonald's, one of the games' sponsors, took up a whole corner. McFlurries were a common choice for many athletes.

Fisher borrowed a wheelchair for the Paralympics' opening ceremony on August 29; she wanted to save her legs. The next day, she won silver in the individual 3K pursuit, where cyclists are placed on opposite sides of the track and try to catch up to each other while completing a set distance. Her then-girlfriend, Emily Garlough, and mom cheered from the stands. Fisher sat a couple rows back from Prince William and Kate Middleton.

She raced in the 500-meter time trial a few days later. Then, the night of Sept. 4, Team USA para-cycling head coach Craig Griffin gathered up his team. He doled out predictions for the medal count for the next day. Fisher's teammate, Joe Berenyi, elbowed her in the ribs, whispering, "You're going to win, but her teammates did too. Fisher was shocked. Not only did her coach and her professors work with her training schedule, but her teammates did too. Fisher was ready to race.

After two years as an international competitor, she expected her to win, but her teammates did too. Fisher was ready to race. Though the Paralympics were over, Fisher's celebration continued. She and Garlough took the Channel to Paris for an overnight. Fisher is a Francophile — she speaks the language and loves the culture. That night, Fisher and Garlough got engaged under the Eiffel Tower at sunset. Fisher receiving her grandmother's beloved wedding ring in a handmade ring box. They got married later that year in Seattle.

The English and Europeans treated Fisher differently. Policemen asked to take pictures with her. She was cheered for on the subway. Racing in the velodrome was like being at a rock concert. People were excited and seemed in awe. For the first time, Fisher felt popular. Being a Paralympian was a big deal, something she rarely felt in America.

She went on the Olympic White House visit a few weeks later. Olympic hurdler Lolo Jones snapped a pic of her and President Obama. Obama and Fisher bonded over their Chicago backgrounds. Jones later emailed it to Fisher.

Fisher won the para-cycling World Championships in 2013, then again in 2014. She finished school, moved back to Missoula with Garlough, who started a tree care business, and got a job at St. Patrick Hospital. She is excited at the chance to race in Rio. Life, since then, has been somewhat of a dream.

The squeaking was audible from down the street. Fisher was already searching for her wrench set when my bike turned into her driveway one Saturday afternoon. She bent down, adjusting the rear tire in its cradle, explaining what was making the bike squeak. The brake had been on for months.

The garage Fisher shares with her wife, now Emily Fisher, shows a room and workbench dominated by bikes. They hang from the walls like columns and hide in the rafters like old toys. Fisher points to each, explaining one is a fat-tire bike in the corner is new to them. The couple cycles apply power to the entirety of their pedal stroke. They push the pedal down, then pull it up, applying constant pressure. Fisher can't do this with her left leg — the leverage is too much on what's left of her thigh. So she does a lot more with her right, leveraging her core to keep balanced. But this adjusting is nothing new to Fisher. In the most prime example, Fisher does her best with what she has. And it's turned out pretty well so far.

Around 50 people gathered in Montgomery Distillery on Saturday, Aug. 13, to send Fisher off to Rio. Yellow Brazilian punch was the featured drink, and Fisher's teammates served as silent auction items, the proceeds of which went to Fisher's Paralympic funds. The amount of community support made her cry about ten times, she said.

Before mounting her bike and riding off down Front Street, Fisher answered a couple of questions. One was the highlight of her night. A young boy asked how Fisher sleeps with her leg. Fisher told him just like everybody else.

Editor's Note: Corrections were made on August 24 to reflect the correct name of Megan Fisher's mother. The original story also stated it was the U.S. coaches who guaranteed Fisher's spot on the Rio Paralympic team when it was The International Paralympic Committee. Fisher also retained her left knee surgery following surgery and her prosthetist, John Angelico, was misidentified as a doctor.
Tim Daniel checks into work on campus at around 9 a.m. He can be typically found in front of the University Corner Store, coffee in one hand and an American Spirit Yellow in the other. A resident Montanan, Daniel is a husband, father of two and full-time staff employee at the University of Montana. He is generally relaxed and attentive, and this is what makes him stand out.

Daniel works in application and web design on the University of Montana’s tech team. But he is also known as a published author, with several of his works optioned for film adaptations. He’s written comics such as “Enormous,” “Curse” and “Burning Fields.” The tales he weaves are heady and emotional. Deeply mired in apocalyptic undertones, his stories typically examine the trials and tribulations of the human condition, unafraid to explore dark territory.

Daniel humanizes the monsters he writes about. In his comic “Curse,” we see a desperate father who battles a decision to transform his son into a werewolf as a cure for his leukemia.

“Curse’ was triggered in part by a Time magazine article about healthcare and how one medical emergency can prove to be financially catastrophic for the average American. I found that idea truly frightening,” Daniel said.

Getting artists to work on Daniel’s stories is simple: he has to sell the story to them.

Two of his written works have been picked up for film adaptations. “Enormous” being already greenlit and in production was soon followed by “Curse,” being optioned by Blumhouse, the production company responsible for “The Purge” and “Paranormal Activity.”

He voiced interest about teaching a class at the University on the writing and business of comics and graphic novels, an offering he felt many students would find appealing. He negotiates contracts, writes, performs both production and design for his books and partners with numerous artists.

“I'm an optimist at heart, and my stories are often cautionary tales,” Daniel said. “They let us know what not to do, even the worst situations can be instructive, to help us learn if we just listen.”
Following swiftly on the heels of his visual album “Endless,” Ocean’s official follow-up to his critically acclaimed “Channel Orange” was released on Aug. 20. As expected, the collection is pretty damn great, but why? Here are five reasons why patience was a virtue when waiting for Frank Ocean’s new album.

1. THE VOCAL VERSATILITY
Frank has one hell of a voice. This is not up for debate, people. Able to reach gorgeous tenor highs as easily as powerful gravelly lows, he effectively sells tales of love and loss in “Blonde.” Bonus points for the Prince-as-Camille style pitched up vocals on album opener “Nikes.” Frank certainly knows his forebears.

2. THE GUEST STARS
Featuring a motley crew of collaborators including Beyoncé, Kendrick Lamar, James Blake, Vampire Weekend’s Rostam Batmanglij and French electronic musician SebastiAn, one could expect the album to sound like a revolving door of superstars with Ocean left on the sidelines. Despite all of the influential musicians on this album, Ocean is always the driving force. It’s his vision all along. You know you’ve got an album made by a confident artist when he has Beyoncé singing on one track as backup.

3. THE MAN
Simply put, Frank Ocean is attractive.

4. THE QUEERER PERSPECTIVE
Much has been made of Ocean’s unwillingness to commit to a stereotypically straight public persona. This is an album that’s ambiguous about gender by an artist who refuses to define his own sexuality. With tracks like the all too brief “Good Guy” describing a blind date with a man, LGBT visibility gets just a touch greater in the public eye.

5. THE SOUND
Pulling from a variety of musical influences, ranging from The Beatles to gospel singer Kim Burrell, Frank has managed to create a lush soundscape that draws listeners in. This is not a pop album, though it’s not lacking in melody, swirl, guitars, twang and clever interpolations of classics by The Beatles and Burt Bacharach sprinkled in like fairy dust. It may take a few listens for Blonde to sink its teeth into you, but I can guarantee it will if you give it a chance.

“If you must blink, do it now.” Films rarely open with such appropriate words. In Laika Studios’ latest, “Kubo and the Two Strings,” arresting visuals and a unique storyline are paired to create another stop-motion winner. Animation doesn’t get much better.

Following in the footsteps of Laika’s previous works “Coraline,” “ParaNorman” and “The Boxtrolls,” director Travis Knight introduces us to a beautifully animated world and a strong lead character. Kubo lives alone with his mother in a cave on an isolated mountain peak somewhere in a fantastical version of ancient Japan. We are told his father was killed years ago by the Moon King, who also stole one of Kubo’s eyes out of jealousy.

Fortunately for Kubo, his little family is in possession of a samisen – a string instrument something like a banjo capable of some pretty useful magic. When played, the wielder is able to create whatever he pleases. From the smallest samurai figurine to an entire flock of birds, the only limitation appears to be the artist’s creativity. This tool comes in handy as the plot swiftly moves Kubo away from home in an attempt to flee the Moon King, who has returned to steal the child’s remaining eye. Without spoiling too much, creative set pieces come at a rapid pace and the film never drags. In the most frightening sequence, The Moon King’s twin witch lackeys – who also happen to be Kubo’s aunts – hunt the boy down wearing expressionless masks. Sublimely voiced by “The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo’s” Rooney Mara, the scene felt like it belonged in such horror classics as “Friday the 13th” and “The Ring.” “Kubo and the Two Strings” isn’t afraid to get dark in order to propel the story along.

Though the visuals are an obvious highlight, the likable characters and excellent writing make the movie more than just dazzling eye candy. Kubo teams up with an anthropomorphized snow monkey and stag beetle aptly named Monkey and Beetle. Voiced respectively by Charlize Theron and Matthew McConaughey, the banter and bickering between the two provides much of the film’s comedic relief. However, as the story develops and more about the history of these characters comes to light, “Kubo and the Two Strings” really finds its heart. This is not simply the story of a boy waging battle against evil forces conspiring to destroy him, this is a story about the strength of familial bonds. Touching on death, loss and the importance of accepting both made for a surprisingly mature effort worthy of viewers of any age.

Pixar may be the reigning champion for most when it comes to animation, but “Kubo and the Two Strings” gives Laika a nearly perfect run of releases thus far. If I were a gambling man, I’d wager we’ve yet to see the studio’s best. Your move, Pixar.
Receiver reload: young corps ready for the challenge

By Nick Puckett
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Montana’s offseason began with a glaring problem in the passing game. Without star wideouts Jamaal Jones and Ellis Henderson, who had more than 2,000 yards receiving and 18 touchdowns combined, Montana needed fresh faces to reboot the passing game.

But finding a pair of sideline threats to replace them isn’t an issue. The lethal ‘go go’ offensive mind of Bob Stitt, combined with Brady Gustafson’s veteran arm, can make any receiver on Montana’s depth chart a star.

Transfers James Homan (Blinn College) and Lamarriel Taylor (Massachusetts) padded the already stacked wide receiver depth chart, and sophomore Caleb Lyons is poised for a standout year in the slot after impressing in the spring.

“As a receiver corps, we’re better than last year,” sophomore receiver Keenan Curran said. “And we’re deeper than we were last year.”

The problem is staying healthy. Homan, Taylor and Lyons each missed time with minor injuries this offseason, surrendering valuable snaps to younger receivers. Though the trio is expected to be ready for the Griz home opener against Saint Francis Sept. 3, the younger guys are turning heads.

Redshirt freshman Jerry Louie-McGee showed off his quick feet during spring scrimmages with a 99-yard kickoff return for six and a pair of touchdown catches to surface as a candidate for the Z-wide receiver job.

Curran, Montana’s second leading returning receiver who earned his first start last season, is in a position to move up the depth chart with his consistent offseason performance.

“We have some younger faces in the program,” said pass game coordinator Nolan Swett. “Not the familiar names like Jamaal Jones or Ellis Henderson, but a ton of young guys that we have a lot of confidence in.”

For Curran, earning the extra snaps means putting in extra work.

“It’ll be different. I tried to condition myself this summer and work my ass off so that I am ready for a bigger role in the offense -- being a consistent player,” Curran said. “When a ball comes my way, I’ve got to make a play. When I have the opportunity to make a big block, I’ve got to make that big block.”

Despite the new and young talent, Swett expects the receivers to step up. Stitt’s offense relies on its receivers to balance an equally damaging run game.

“I tell the guys all the time if we don’t perform we’re going to lose games,” Swett said. “They’ve got to put a lot of pressure on themselves. In this kind of offense, we’re going to throw the ball around a little bit.”

Montana uses two receiver prototypes in their offense, and two coaches to match.

The outside receivers, helmed by Swett, are typically big-bodied red zone threats similar to Calvin Johnson, roles which were previously filled by Jones and Henderson.

Mike Ferriter coaches the inside receivers — the slot guys. Montana’s slot receivers stretch from smaller speedsters with soft hands, like Lyons, to large, intimidating tight end-types, like 6-foot-5 junior Josh Horner. Horner emerged as a starter toward the end of last season and is the leading returning receiver in the bunch.

With the complex style of Stitt’s high-octane offense, the new hands have a lot to learn in little time.

“I have no doubt that we’re talented enough to do great things on the field,” Louie-McGee said. “It’s more mental. Knowing plays and doing the right thing.”

The offense will shuffle through several receivers each game, as is typical in a fast-paced offense, but the shortened time will make it difficult for individual pass catchers to stand out. With a talented group, players will do what it takes to earn snaps. And each snap is a chance to shine.

“The unit does a great job to understand that they’re a small part of a bigger unit,” Swett said. “They like to push each other, like to see each other succeed, and hopefully their competitive nature ends up getting them all sorts of success.”
Welcome back Widner: Grizzly star returns to pitch

By Jackson Wagner
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One year ago, Hallie Widner hobbled across Grizzly Soccer Field on crutches, a cast protecting the broken leg that kept her out for the season, after Allie Lucas scored a game-winning goal in overtime to defeat Eastern Washington.

This year, Widner, who’s back on the field and healthy again, one-timed a bouncing ball and knocked down a perfectly weighted back heel pass to McKenzie Warren, who buried the game-winner against the Big 10’s Purdue into the top-left corner.

For Widner, the assist highlighted an already incredible weekend that included a headed goal in the 84th minute to send the Purdue game into overtime, and a goal in the season-opening win against Oakland.

The two-goal, one-assist weekend earned Widner Big Sky Conference Player of the Week honors, but individual awards don’t mean as much to Widner as being healthy again and back on the pitch.

“It is a whole team effort,” Widner said about earning the award. “I wouldn’t be here without them so I’m just so grateful to be back on the field and playing again.”

Widner arrived at Montana in 2014 and immediately impacted the Grizzly soccer program. As a freshman, Widner scored seven goals and added three assists, good enough to be named Big Sky Newcomer of the Year and found her a First Team All-Big Sky roster spot.

Then, a broken leg while playing at the U.S. Youth Soccer National Championships sidelined her for the entire 2015 season, taking away the game she loved. Now, Widner is in form and happy again.

“It is just great to see her on the field again, to see her smiling and back with her teammates playing,” coach Mark Plakorus said. “Hallie is a special kid in that she is just so happy when she is on the field. Last year wasn’t a happy year for her. It was a tough year having the thing she loves to do taken away from her, so just to see her smiling and having fun, that is the greatest thing for me.”

The skill Widner put on display with the back heel assist, which Plakorus said a lot of people around the world try but few have the ability to perform, can appear from out of nowhere. Plakorus said that she is one of the most creative players on the team, and the talent is obvious.

The opening weekend for Widner impressed fans, but there are still improvements that she can make as she gets more and more comfortable being back out on the pitch.

“I don’t think, and I think she’ll admit it to, she is not back yet,” Plakorus said. “She still has some improving to do … but every day out she gets better and better and I think there is more there.”

The perfect weekend for the Grizzlies earned them a top 10 spot in the Pacific Region rankings, a first under Plakorus. The team is off to a hot start, and the goal is clear: win a Big Sky Championship.

In 2014, Widner’s last full season, Montana went undefeated in the Big Sky and hosted the conference tournament. After a 5-4-1 Big Sky slate last season, the Grizzlies are looking to return to the top, and Widner will be a big reason why.

While Widner said her goal for the team is to win championships, the humble star is just thrilled to be back inside the lines.

“It’s hard to explain,” she said. “I’m just so happy to be back and to be out there with my teammates, there is no better feeling than that.” •

In the wise and fitting words of Chance the Rapper, “And we back, and we back and we back.” School is back at the University of Montana, and the start of the new school year brings change in the classroom and in the athletic arena.

No longer will coach Robin Selvig roam the sidelines. The unstoppable receiving duo of Ellis Henderson and Janimal Jones are gone. Martin Breunig’s thunderous slam dunks will now happen in Germany instead of Dahlberg Arena. The nets of the Adams Center also won’t have to worry about McCall Feller torching them.

MacKenzie Akins won’t be making any more cutting runs at the South Campus Stadium and opposing frontlines no longer need to focus their attention on the powerful attack of Hannah Sackett.

Montana’s athletic teams may have lost a lot, but the future is looking bright for one of the most dominating programs in the Big Sky.

The Kaimin also lost some amazing people and talented writers in the sports department, but that is the beauty and the tragedy of a student newspaper like the Kaimin. If you’ve hated us in the past, those reporters and editors that angered you are probably gone now.

If you loved our stories, odds are that writer is now gone off into the real world. Change is a way of life at the Kaimin but, just like John Calipari at Kentucky, we’re always ready to reload with some new talent and fresh faces.

I’m Jackson Wagner, and I’ll be serving as sports editor this year after being the deputy editor last season. My predecessors taught me everything they could, and I’m excited to captain this ship for the next couple of years.

Also returning is Nick Puckett, a junior who is fresh off a summer internship at the Missoulian and is ready to bring you everything you need on football game days.

We have also added Taylor Featherman, last year’s High School Journalist of the Year in the state of Montana. Featherman, a local Missoulian product, specializes in broadcast (he hosts his own radio show on KBGA) but will be transitioning to the print side.

Isaiah Dunk is another new and exciting addition for the Kaimin. A loyal sports fan, cheering for champions like the Toronto Raptors, Dunk will be getting his first taste of real-world journalism and reporting.

This is a fresh new staff of writers, with a new editor overseeing things. There may be some growing pains, but we’re already working our hardest.

We have a talented and eager staff, ready to bring you news on all the highs and lows in the world of Grizzly athletics. Buckle up, it is going to be a fun ride. •