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Grizzlies win game against Utah State Aggies; Miscellaneous

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MISSOULA, Mont., Oct. Tomahawked by Redskins, hoorawed by Cowpokes, slashed by Cougars and shot by Pioneers, a battered and bitter Grizzly Saturday turned on its embattled haunches, mauled and clawed an unsuspecting Farmer, then returned to its lair to await an invading pack of maurading Lobos.

All of the above, translated freely from the purple prose of the journalistic style of yesteryear, simply means that after dropping four straight games to conference opponents, Montana came off the canvas to register a stunning 35-25 upset victory over the Aggies of Utah State, then returned to Missoula to prepare for this week's game with the New Mexico Lobos.

But one game a season does not make—particularly with the caliber of Montana's next two opponents, New Mexico and Idaho.

So, after giving the team a weekend holiday, the first since the season started, Coach Jerry Williams Tuesday sent his charges through heavy defensive drills aimed at stopping New Mexico's bevy of speedy pony backs.

"While we'll naturally spend some time on our offense, our principal concern is how we will contain New Mexico's backs," Williams declared.

"Those backs are by far faster than any we have, so we'll have to stop them with our line."

Whether this will be possible, only time will tell. The Lobos have a considerable weight advantage up front—their starting lineup averages 204 pounds as compared to Montana's 197-pound average.

Much has been made of Montana's "bulky" line, but in only one contest has the Grizzly forward wall outweighed its opposing counterpart.

Key to Montana's success Saturday will be the good right arm of quarterback (more)
Earl Keeley. The 181-pound junior transfer from Wenatchee (Wash.) Junior College stole the aerial show away from Utah State's Bob Winters Saturday.

Although outgained in yards—180 to 174—Keeley completed 14 of 22 for two touchdowns while Winters connected on 12 of 25 attempts.

"Keeley is what our team needed," Williams declared after the game. "He runs the club out there with the poise and forethought of a pro quarterback."

Utah State found out, much to its detriment, that Keeley will gamble, even when the situation seemingly precludes anything but a "safe" call. Such an instance was in the second quarter when the blond T-general ran for a first down out of a punt formation in a fourth and three-to-go situation. The ball was in Montana territory at the time and the Grizzlies holding a 1-point lead.

Stan Renning blocked and tackled his way to a fifth consecutive nomination as "Outstanding Lineman of the game." Oddly enough, Renning's outstanding plays came not on defense, where he has gained renown, but on offense where his crushing blocks set up several long gainers by Grizzly backs.

If Montana can get defensive performances the equal of last week's stints from tackles Karl Benjamin, Gary Kennedy and John Dixon; guards Sam Jankovich, Ron Brown and John Love; and ends Pete Rhinehart and Terry Hurley, the Grizzlies perhaps have a chance to give the powerful Lobos a fair battle.

Based on comparative performances, material and even considering the home field advantage, the Wolfpack still rates a two-touchdown nod over the Silvertips.

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MISCELLANEOUS

Utah State coaches commented after the game Saturday that Montana administered as severe a physical beating to their team as they had suffered all season. Despite the fact that several Aggies had to be helped from the field, Montana came out of the game without an injury and with very few bruises.
Grizzly halfback Howie Johnson really came into his own against Utah State. The diminutive but hard-driving Missoula lad gained 70 yards in 13 carries. One of his ball-carrying stints was a broken-field masterpiece that but for the defensive efforts of a fleet Aggie back, would have ended in a Grizzly touchdown.

Montana's fourth touchdown—a 53-yard pass play from Keeley to end Larry Myers, at the beginning of the second half—was set up by Coach Williams during half-time. It was the first time that this particular pass pattern ever was tried.

Montana's 35-25 victory over Utah State marked:
The most points (60) scored by the two teams in the 24-game series.
The first time Montana defeated the Aggies at Logan since 1949.
The breaking of a nine-game losing streak, dating back to the 21-14 win over Brigham Young on Dornblaser Field, Oct. 20, 1956.
The first Montana win away from home since the Grizzlies turned the trick against the state college Bobcats in Bozeman Nov. 5, 1955.

The tremendous team spirit demonstrated by Montana at Logan last week may have been inspired in part by a letter from the Montana Century Club, a Grizzly booster organization, that was read to the team just prior to the game. The letter, essentially a vote of confidence for the coaching staff and team, said in part: "The enthusiasm and competitive spirit shown...was definitely encouraging..." "We believe the conduct of the staff and squad, both on and off the field, has been such that we are proud to have them represent our University. The coaches and players shall continue to have our confidence and support."

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