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In retrospect; Frosh statistics indicate successful season

University of Montana–Missoula. Office of University Relations

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IN RETROSPECT:

MISSOULA, Mont., Nov. _____ The Grizzly football season, which began with high hopes last September, ended in a nightmare last Saturday as a rash of game injuries took their toll and the Silvertips dropped their final contest of the season to Colorado State University 19-7.

To say that Montana this year was plagued with hard luck is an understatement. Starting with a severe influenza attack that decimated the entire Grizzly team at the start of the season and continuing through quarterback Earl Keeley’s bursitis attack, the mid-season injuries that denied Montana the use of several of its top linemen and finally the broken collar bone of Keeley, the trail of the Silvertip this year has been woeful.

The major factors in Montana’s inability to rack up more than two victories in a nine-game schedule were the influenza outbreak and the injuries to Keeley.

Satisfied that at last he had a quarterback to make his offense go, Coach Jerry Williams chose this year to install the offense popularly known as the Wing-spread. Combining single-wing power in the line with the lightning-like thrusts of the straight T-formation, success of the Wing-spread depends on a quarterback of high caliber.

It also takes a few days to teach.

When the influenza struck down 36 ballplayers during the first 20 days of practice the situation looked gloomy, but when Keeley, around whom the offense was built, came down with bursitis, the outlook became almost hopeless.
Defense, an absolutely vital part of modern football, virtually was abandoned as Williams and his staff desperately strived to get an offense in shape for the onrushing season.

The result is history. In the first three games the Grizzly offense sputtered and defense virtually was nil.

Then Keeley returned to action. And Montana began to roll.

A quick look at the statistics show just what Keeley—or it could have been any quarterback that fit the specifications of a Wing-spread field general—meant to Montana.

In the first three games Montana averaged 3.57 yards per play while its opponents padded their averages and rolled to a 5.12 yard-per-play average.

With Keeley back in action, Williams devoted more time to defense. The statistical breakdown of the middle of the Grizzly schedule shows that the defensive as well as the offense aspects of Montana’s grid game had improved tremendously.

The Grizzlies’ pass offense went into high gear and thus caused the running attack to function better. The end result was a 4.80 yard-per-play average—well above the national norm of 4 1/2 yards per play.

Opponents, who had been clipping the Grizzlies at five yards a clout, found the going a little tougher in the middle five games. The combined totals show the per play average at 4.36 yards—a considerable improvement over the first three games.

With a veteran team returning—only nine men, four of them regulars, will be lost through graduation—and with the Williams’ offense thoroughly installed, majority of the time in spring and early fall practice next year can be devoted to defense.

Next year Keeley will be backed by Jim Monasmith, a passing sensation who in four games with the frosh this year completed 30 of 60 passes for 522 yards and seven touchdowns. Besides these two, sophomore Bruce Olson, who began to display
his potential when he stepped into Keeley's shoes in the season's finale, and sophomore Phil Griffin are on hand at the quarterback slot.

Impartial observers around the Skyline Conference term Williams' offense as one of the best in the country. The wingback reverse, for example, nearly is unstoppable and averaged seven yards a carry during the season.

Williams, in his three years at Montana, has produced two nationally ranked passers and two nationally ranked pass receivers—Norm Kampschror in 1955 and Keeley in 1957; Terry Hurley in 1955 and Larry Myers in 1957.

Keeley and Myers return next year.

Then there is the redoubtable Stan Renning, who this year likely will make everybody's all-conference team, and possibly nip a slot on some All-America squad. Renning returns next season to head up an all-veteran line.

The most optimistic outlook this fall still had the Grizzlies "a year away." With luck they could have won three, possibly four more games. But the big year for Montana football is 1958 when a veteran, poised club makes a powerful bid for a Skyline football championship.

(more)
FROSH STATISTICS INDICATE SUCCESSFUL SEASON

Grizzly yearlings, who completed their season last week with a 13-0 win over Wenatchee Junior College, spent their final week of the season scrimmaging the varsity.

The results of the season and the scrimmage sessions indicate that several blue-chip prospects can be expected to labor well in Silvertip livery during the next three seasons.

The Cubs had a powerful line, spearheaded by guards John Matte and Jerry Luchau, tackles John Gregor and Rollie Humble; and ends Roy Lynne and Ted McEllhenney.

They also had a talented backfield led by slingin' Jim Monasmith.

CUB STATISTICS

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(2 TD's scored on fumble rec.)

1956 Results

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