Montana Grizzlies ranking depends on Silvertips-Pioneers game

University of Montana--Missoula. Office of University Relations
MISSOULA, Mont. Jan. Montana's well-balanced cage machine will be put to a severe test this week when the Silvertips invade the home lodgings of the Denver Pioneers on Thursday and the New Mexico Lobo's Saturday.

The Grizzlies currently are tied for the league lead with Wyoming and Colorado State—the three teams undefeated in two loop starts.

All three teams hit the road this week and, on the basis of competition to be faced, the Silvertips have a good chance to be on top of the league next Sunday.

Not that the competition the Grizzlies face will be any less stern, but Wyoming and Colorado State play Utah State and Brigham Young on successive nights while Montana will have a day's grace after facing the Pioneers.

The one-day break might make the difference.

Both Denver and New Mexico are winless in two league starts. The Pioneers lost to Colorado State at Fort Collins 62-56 and to Wyoming at Laramie 68-56. New Mexico was jolted 101-61 by the Cowboys at Laramie and the following night capitulated to Colorado State 77-58.

The Grizzlies' wins were from Utah at Salt Lake City 73-67 and a squeaker from BYU at Missoula 71-69.

Coach Frosty Cox, who does not consider even death or taxes as sure things, definitely is apprehensive about Montana's swing down the sunrise slope of the Rockies.

"Both Denver and New Mexico have good teams. They'll be even better at home," Frosty declared. "We've got a good ball club---just how good remains to be seen."

Cox unquestionably was referring to the unaccountable slumps the Grizzlies have hit in their past few outings. Against Brigham Young, Montana hit a miserable 25.6 per cent while the Cougars canned 43.2 per cent of their field goals in

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the first half, yet came back strong to overcome a 13-point deficit and win 71-69.

Montana's secret of success has been a balanced scoring splurge that breaks
the game wide open. The balanced scoring shows up in the cumulative statistics
where four of the five starters are averaging in the double figures and, the fifth,
center Russ Sheriff, close behind with a 9.0 per game average.

Jim Powell, junior forward and all-conference candidate, leads the pack with
143 points---15.9 game average. He has canned 43 points in two Skyline games and
has been the chief Grizzly offensive weapon in the clutch.

Russ Sheriff, another strong all-conference candidate, makes up for his scor­
ing deficit with a strong effort on the boards. In nine games, Sheriff has pulled
down 115 rebounds for a 12.8 per game average in that department.

Junior Darroll Dunham is second in scoring with 110 points and second in re­
bounding with 95.

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