Montana Grizzlies discuss games and strategies; Silvertips slants

University of Montana--Missoula. Office of University Relations
MISSOULA, MONTANA---The Montana Grizzlies have to make two basic corrections to get back on the winning trail in three contests this week:

1. First of all, the cagers must improve an offensive game that has averaged only 63 points per tussle.

2. They must find some way to shore up their defenses--the Silvertips have given up an average of 75 points in three encounters.

It's in this second category that coach Frosty Cox has expressed the most dissatisfaction. The veteran mentor, well-known throughout the Rockies for his defensive ball clubs, commented early this week that the defensive show is the worst in his five seasons as head coach at Montana. "It's simply a matter of being much tougher on the boards and in all-around defensive play," the coach said.

With the Grizzlies slated against South Dakota Wednesday night in Missoula and against Oregon State Friday and Saturday in Corvallis, Cox will spend most of his practice time working on defense this week.

But improving a 30 per cent shooting average also is on the agenda. After opening the season with an acceptable 38 per cent average against Idaho, the Grizzlies went cold on the road. Last Friday they hit only 27 per cent against Washington State, and Saturday night they scored one-third of their shots in losing to Idaho.

Veterans Dan Balko, Terry Screnar and Vince Ignatowicz have scored with a reasonable amount of consistency so far, with Balko carrying a 16.3 average into this week's games. Two other performers--forward Dan Sullivan and center Duane Ruegsegger--have not scored well enough to cement their starting jobs. Both started out well against Idaho, but fell off on the road games.

(more)
Montana meets South Dakota for the first time in history Wednesday night, and Cox says he has nothing but respect for coach Dwane Clotfelter's Coyote cage crew. "They have three veterans from the 1958 team that won an NCAA College Division championship, and we'll have to play topnotch ball to win."

Sparking the Coyotes are senior guards Ken Mizerny and Larry Loomis, along with veteran forward Jim Chamberlain. Sophomores Angelo Donegan and Roger Faber will round out the SDU lineup.

Veteran mentor Slats Gill has plenty of altitude at Oregon State, and this in itself will present plenty of problems for the shorter Montanans. The Beavers started their season with three games in Hawaii, and will be opening their home schedule against the Grizzlies.

Following the weekend games, Montana has only one tussle scheduled during the holidays—a Dec. 23 encounter with one of the top teams in the Big Eight, Nebraska, in Missoula.

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SILVERTIP SLANTS.....

If history repeats itself this weekend, the Grizzlies should enjoy some success in their weekend encounters in Oregon. Last season, sporting a sorry 1-6 record in late December, the Montanans journeyed to Eugene and split two contests with a tough Oregon University crew. This seemingly supplied the spark that pushed the Grizzlies to a 7-7 Skyline mark later in the season. This year, the Grizzlies will be fighting the same early-season inconsistency that has dogged them for the past several years.

Montana football coach Ray Jenkins will journey to Bozeman this weekend to participate in a wrestling clinic for Montana high school coaches at the State College. Jenkins was an All-Skyline wrestler for the University of Colorado during his collegiate days.

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