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Grizzly Sports Column

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GRIZZLY SPORTS COLUMN

MISSOULA—How’s it feel to be a second-stringer?

Take it from a number of Montana University basketball players—they don’t like the idea. It’s not that they are envious of their more-publicised teammates. It’s just that they want to see plenty of action themselves.

"Sure, I know that Dan Balko and Vice Ignatowicz (Montana’s starting guards) are ahead of me, and they deserve to be," says Bob O’Billovich of Butte, a sophomore guard. "But I got used to the habit of playing regularly during the football season, and this business of sitting on the bench makes me nervous."

Another bench warmer—guard Ron Quilling from Sidney—says it’s like being a pinch-hitter in baseball. "You go into the game cold, and it takes several minutes to warm up. By that time, the game is over or you’ve been yanked."

Forward John Lands adopts a different attitude. "I’m sort of the team handyman, and I usually go into the game when someone isn’t performing up to par. I feel that I can be of more value to the team by being a 'fireman'."

All in all, the Grizzly bench candidates want to get into the action. They realize that the more experienced players have first call—but they all seem confident that they can do a good job. And many of them have.

"The substitutes have it rough," says coach Frosty Cox. "Most of them don’t have the experience to play consistent ball. But, little by little, they are learning enough so that they will be valuable in seasons to come."

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