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Montana Grizzlies need to focus on defensive basketball; Butte Benefit Night set for March 5

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MISSOULA, MONTANA--The solution to the woes of the Montana Grizzlies lies in one of coach Frosty Cox's fundamental precepts—defensive basketball. With the Silvertips needing three victories in their remaining four games to match their worst Skyline record in four seasons, a glance at season statistics will bear out the theory that Montana must sharpen up its defensive play.

The Silvertips this season have averaged 67.5 points per game—slightly better than teams of the past three campaigns. But they have given up an average of 74.2 points per game, an increase of roughly 10 points over last season. And in the past five Skyline encounters the Grizzlies have allowed opponents 80 points per game.

At any rate, the Silvertips still have slight hopes of moving into the Skyline's seventh position before the season closes. They will be definite underdogs this weekend when they meet Utah State at Logan Thursday night. The Aggies will be prepping for their Saturday night showdown battle with Utah, and coach Cecil Baker realizes that a lapse against the Grizzlies would be fatal.

Saturday the Silvertips move to Provo to meet Brigham Young, the team that knocked over Montana in Missoula early in January. The Cougars boast the Skyline's top scorer in center Dave Eastis, and once again the Grizzlies will be underdogs.

Coach Frosty Cox had little praise for his Grizzlies after two losses to New Mexico and Denver in Missoula last weekend. Montana shot well in both contests, but the opposition did better.

The coach did indicate that his reserves will see more and more action for the rest of the season. The Silvertip subs, sparked by Bob O'Billovich, Kay Roberts, and Ron Quilling, cut down a Denver 15-point bulge in the final five minutes Saturday.

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"Some of the veterans haven't been producing consistently all season," the coach commented. "If this continues, they'll be putting in a lot of time on the bench in the next two weeks."

Center Duane Ruegsegger, who leads the team in field goal shooting, had the best output of the weekend, hitting 40 points in the two contests. Ruegsegger, with six games under his belt since returning to the team early this month after suffering an arm injury, has increased his scoring output to 16 points per tussle.

Following their final road trip this week, the Silvertips move back to Missoula to meet Colorado State and Wyoming next weekend. Two victories could move the Silvertips ahead of Wyoming in Skyline standings.

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MISSOULA--Montana's final home game with Wyoming March 5 has been designated as Butte Benefit Night, according to athletic director George Dahlberg.

Dahlberg explained that all proceeds exceeding the average gate for Montana-Wyoming games of past seasons will be donated to Butte relief funds. The Mining City, in the midst of a costly strike until two weeks ago, is still in need of additional welfare funds.

"We hope to have a full house for the final game of the season," Dahlberg commented. Under an arrangement agreed to by both Montana institutions, Montana State College will follow the same procedure at one of its final home games.

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