

# MONTANA KAIMIN

## FEELING

### THE

## HEAVEN



***Telemark skiing was a sport of the past.  
One club is bringing it back.***

***Story by Riley Comstock / Photos by Marley Barboeisel***



**6** Winter on campus

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Cover photo by Marley Barboeisel

February 27, 2025 | Volume 127 | Issue No. 20



The Montana Kaimin is a weekly independent student newspaper at the University of Montana. The Kaimin office and the University of Montana are located on land originally inhabited by the Salish People. Kaimin is a derivative of a Salish language word, "Qe'ymin," that is pronounced kay-MEEN and means "book," "message" or "paper that brings news."

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## KAIMIN KOMICS: SE 2 EP 10



BARRETT CLEMENT | MONTANA KAIMIN *BARRETT*

# Staying healthy on campus

As spring semester midterms loom overhead, the last thing we need is to get sick. Unfortunately, this is an all too likely reality.

According to Jeff Adams, medical director for the Curry Health Center, these past few weeks have been the peak time for respiratory illnesses and check-ins at Curry. Here's what Adams suggested to help us get over our sniffles and keep them away from our fellow classmates.

Here's the obvious tip: keep your distance from people you know are sick. Anyone remember COVID-19?

However, obvious doesn't always mean easy, as students are often packed in small classrooms or shared living spaces. When your roommate is the one who's sick, you might want to take some extra precautions, like taking time away from the dorm, spending extra time sanitizing shared items and paying close attention to your own body. This means not sharing vapes or penjamins too, people!

When you do come in contact with those infected, Adams recommended not touching your mouth, nose and eye areas and, of course, washing your hands thoroughly and often.

Another way to keep yourself safe is to catch up on vaccinations. Curry Health Center's pharmacy offers COVID-19 and influenza shots on demand. Without insurance the COVID shot is \$190 and the flu shot is \$30 without insurance, but if you have insurance, both should be covered. The Center for Disease Control recommends getting your flu vaccination yearly as it can help reduce your risk of catching influenza. Trust me, your fear of needles will pale in comparison to the pain of an illness that used to kill medieval peasants by the hundreds.

This next part might be difficult for some of you to hear, but, it's necessary. You need to make sure you're getting enough sleep.

Adams said getting better sleep plays a big part in maintaining health. All that cramming for midterms in the middle of the night isn't going to help you much when you're too sick to read.

Adams recommended a few steps you can take when you do get sick, like staying home or sequestering, to a corner of the dorm. I know when you've used up your two allotted sick days already, this idea may seem impossible. Chances are, your professor doesn't want to get sick either, so make sure you communicate with them to the best of your abilities and be sincere. Stay up to date on Canvas too, so when you do feel better you're not drowning in missing assignments. And if they really won't give you a day off, make sure you sneeze in their direction.

If you do need to go out, Adams recommends that you mask up to prevent the spread of illness. But, seriously, try not to go out. The vodka sodas will be there next weekend, I promise.

If you have severe symptoms like a high fever or indicators of influenza or COVID-19 go to Curry Health Center or your doctor right away. If your symptoms are more mild, Adams recommended first using self care methods like increased fluid intake, extra sleep, medicine and taking it easy. I recommend finding a new show to binge.

Another tip Adams shared is using zinc products. But if your symptoms do not get better, you should make an appointment as soon as you can. Even if your body doesn't have your back, Adams said the Curry Health Center will.

-Caydence Martin, digital editor

**Like it? Hate it? Let us know.**  
Email us your opinions at  
claire.bernard@umontana.edu

### SUDOKU

Difficulty: Medium

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|   |   |   |   |   | 1 |   |   |   |
|   |   |   |   | 7 | 3 |   |   | 2 |
|   | 3 |   |   | 6 |   | 7 | 8 |   |
|   | 6 |   |   |   |   |   |   | 9 |
| 4 |   |   |   | 9 | 2 |   |   |   |
|   |   | 3 |   |   | 4 |   | 2 |   |
|   | 9 | 5 | 4 |   | 7 | 1 |   |   |
|   | 8 |   |   |   |   |   | 9 |   |
| 2 |   |   |   | 5 |   |   | 4 |   |

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Edited by Margie E. Burke

**HOW TO SOLVE:**

Each row must contain the numbers 1 to 9; each column must contain the numbers 1 to 9; and each set of 3 by 3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 to 9.

Answer to Previous Sudoku:

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 7 | 3 | 9 |
| 4 | 7 | 3 | 9 | 6 | 8 | 2 | 1 | 5 |
| 2 | 5 | 9 | 7 | 1 | 3 | 8 | 6 | 4 |
| 5 | 9 | 4 | 3 | 7 | 2 | 6 | 8 | 1 |
| 3 | 6 | 1 | 8 | 9 | 5 | 4 | 7 | 2 |
| 7 | 2 | 8 | 6 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 9 | 3 |
| 1 | 8 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 7 | 9 | 5 | 6 |
| 6 | 4 | 7 | 1 | 5 | 9 | 3 | 2 | 8 |
| 9 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 8 | 6 | 1 | 4 | 7 |

# Lucky break



Kaden Chapman, a business major, and Emma Pazzulla, a communicative sciences and disorders major, play cards at Break Espresso to take a break from homework on Feb. 22. Break Espresso, located in downtown Missoula on North Higgins, has been a popular spot for college students to grind out their school work since 1994. **NOAH EPPS | MONTANA KAIMIN**

# In this week's briefs...

### UM RANKS FIRST IN COMMUNITY AND NATIONAL SERVICE

For the third year in a row, the University of Montana was ranked the top university in the country in community and national service.

"This ranking confirms what we know to be true: UM students and alumni continuously outperform their peers in the fields of community, national and military service," President Seth Bodnar said to UM News. "As Grizzlies, we are united by our passion to give back, serve and do our part to address the most pressing challenges facing our society."

Washington Monthly conducts the annual rankings studying liberal arts universities in the United States on their contribution to public good in three categories: social mobility, research and promoting public service. The study describes social mobility as a university's "bang for their buck," factoring in graduation rates, diversity of the student population and number of Pell Grant recipients.

Although UM ranked first in public service, it ranked 373 in social mobility and 162 in research. The research category measures universities spending on research, number of doctorates awarded and number of faculty receiving prestigious awards, among others.

The public service ranking measured factors including the number of ROTC students, voter registration and graduates going into high demand fields like education, health care, social work and law.

"From the moment they arrive for orientation to the day they receive their diploma, our students have access to unmatched service and community building opportunities," Bodnar said to UM News. "That is one of the values of a UM education that sets us apart from everyone else."

*(Corbin Vanderby)*

### FOUR STUDENTS HOPE TO ENCOURAGE ECO-FRIENDLY DECISIONS WITH A REWARD SYSTEM

In order to complete their capstone requirement, four Franke Global Leadership Initiative students paired together to create a program encouraging students to be more eco-friendly in March.

The program echoes the ideas of projects

in Europe, like Copenpay. With the initiative of a reward, people are encouraged to use eco-friendly alternatives for simple, everyday tasks, such as riding a bike or bringing a reusable cup to a coffee shop. The students, all from different majors, include Hattie Ransom, a fourth-year student from Utah, and Jaymie Sanders, a senior from Missoula.

The two said some students are reluctant to participate in their project, but still have hopes for gaining good traction when the program launches on March 1.

"The program is designed to not be super in-your-face. We're hoping that because people can choose to opt in or not, hopefully no one gets too upset," Ransom said.

Once the app is launched, students will be able to download the "EcoPaws" app to document their eco-friendly decisions and submit them to the app to accumulate points. With the points, students will be able to collect rewards from one of the four people running the program. Rewards include everything from a free scoop of ice cream from Big Dipper to a free ticket for a movie screening at the Roxy.

The group were paired together during the fall semester after finding similar viewpoints through talking on discussion posts. From there, they began working on what the focus of their capstone project would be. The group had discussed creating a curriculum that focused on trauma-informed child care, but felt the execution did not fit their needs for the project.

"We felt that was not enough engagement, we would just be building a curriculum," said Sanders, a neuroscience major.

Students enrolled in the Franke Global Engagement Initiative capstone must create a project with a measurable outcome as they discuss a problem and introduce something to solve it. Through the fall semester, the group researched and pitched their idea, but spring semester meant executing it.

EcoPaws will run from March 1 to 31 and students will be able to redeem points for eco-friendly decisions through an app. To pick up a reward of choice, students must set up a meeting with one of the four people running the program. The members hope to find a way to keep their app alive following the end of their project.

For the full story, read online at [montanakaimin.com](http://montanakaimin.com).

*(Sav Chavez)*

### Confessions of a college town: Pie Hole



Montana Kaimin sports reporter Maxwell Johnson interviews Pie Hole patrons while working on the "Confessions of a College Town: Pie Hole" Kaimin Cast episode.

MARLEY BARBOEISEL | MONTANA KAIMIN

Listen to this week's Kaimin Cast where Bayliss Flynn and company take you through the confessions of a college town. Pie Hole is a local pizza spot that has been open for about a decade. Seven days a week, it operates from 11 a.m. to 3 a.m., catering to Missoulians from all walks of life. The Kaimin team took shifts to cover the 14 hours of daily operation on a bustling Friday to figure out the stories behind the pizza-eating patrons.

In this episode, shift lead Reya Worley walks through the kitchen. Almost every inch of wall space was covered in writing. They're quotes of inside jokes, philosophy and randomness.

"There used to be a quote over here that was, 'Never trust a Tuesday,'" she said. "And I wish that had never got erased because it truly encapsulates this place. It can go from 0 to 100 regardless of what is actually happening on any given day."



New episodes out every other Monday. Scan for the latest.

## POLICE BLOTTER

ABBY WILLIAMS

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If you're ready for spring break even though it's still two weeks away, clap your hands! If you love starting petty arguments with your kid or random drivers, clap your hands! If you're a tired resident assistant who is sick of smelling weed in your dorm hall and you just want to go home for two weeks, and still don't know how these minors get age restricted substances, clap your hands!

### FEB. 17 – DOWN THE BOULEVARD OF PISSED RAS

"I work like a dog, day and night." The Miller and Duniway RAs have been channeling their inner Katherine Johnson from Hidden Figures recently. A Miller RA reported a weed odor to the University of Montana Police Department, and the student received a minor in possession charge and was referred for conduct. Now it's Miller Hall's turn to wear black and put on a shit-ton of eyeliner. You won't walk a lonely road, the only road that you have ever known, since Duniway is right there with ya!

### FEB. 18 – UNBRIDLED ANGER

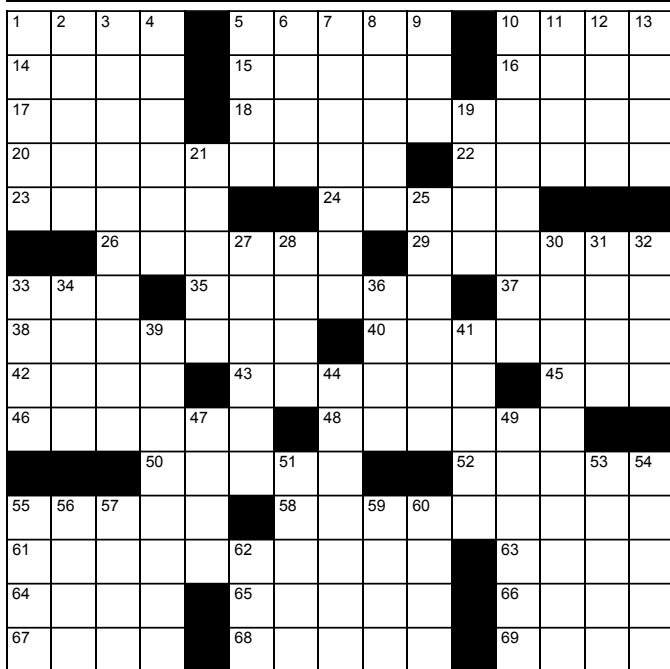
A fight broke out in a parking lot over two cars being too close together. When the driver of car A parked and got out, the door of their car hit car B, according to its driver. While there was no damage done to car B, the two drivers got into a heated argument. Both were referred for conduct. Imagine getting into such a big fight over parking that the cops have to come. There was no damage done to either car as well! Go take your Viagra and change your pampers, because big boys don't get hung up on such petty details.

### FEB. 18 – FOUND YOU: PART ONE

A frequent trespasser was found sleeping in the University Center, and decided to give campus officers a fake name when questioned. Since UMPD has made contact with the non-student before, they charged the man with trespassing and obstructing a peace officer. The man was removed from campus. If you were a comedian, you wouldn't be sleeping in the UC so why are you clowning and giving cops a fake name?

### FEB. 19 – FOUND YOU: PART TWO

Our bestie from a crime ago was found sleeping in a shed on a UM practice field by police. The officers followed footprints in the snow and found the trespasser snoozing on campus ground. What if we all rewatched 101 Dalmatians and copied the cute little puppies using a leaf to sweep away their footprints? Or magically floated to where we needed to be? The trespasser once again got a criminal charge and was removed from campus. See you next time!



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ACROSS

- 1 Iditarod, for one
- 5 Humiliate
- 10 Nursery item
- 14 \_\_\_\_-clad
- 15 Shop tool
- 16 Parks in 1955 news
- 17 Johnson and Knotts
- 18 Some are French-cut
- 20 Worthy of respect
- 22 Pearl Buck's "The Good \_\_\_\_"
- 23 Twilled fabric
- 24 Atlas feature
- 26 Not learned
- 29 Cookie bits
- 33 Dylan or Marley
- 35 Sound invest-ment?
- 37 Stir up
- 38 Teach
- 40 Arched wall area
- 42 Some learning
- 43 Folsom fellow
- 45 Cut with an ax
- 46 Slight quake
- 48 Kind of job or joke
- 50 Ties up
- 52 Lysol targets
- 55 Malice
- 58 Hearty pub meal
- 61 Nobel Prize category
- 63 Skier's aid
- 64 Sure anagram
- 65 Piece of history
- 66 Certain wood-wind
- 67 Like some meat

- 68 Toothpaste brand
- 69 Yosemite sight

DOWN

- 1 Carnival attractions
- 2 Stood up
- 3 Pitch in
- 4 Naval officer
- 5 Pond floater
- 6 Fishhook feature
- 7 Studio for Seurat
- 8 Martin or Charlie
- 9 Coop dweller
- 10 Sci-fi villain
- 11 Laugh heartily
- 12 Ain't correct?
- 13 Wingding
- 19 "Cold one"
- 21 Smart set
- 25 Merit-badge earners
- 27 Garb
- 28 1985 film, "\_\_\_\_ Wolf"
- 30 Expectant woman

- 31 Angler's hope
- 32 Whole lot
- 33 Lahr who played the Cowardly Lion
- 34 Telltale sign
- 36 Zest
- 39 Ghost story setting
- 41 Corral call
- 44 Govern badly
- 47 Mind-matter connector
- 49 Dictator
- 51 TNT ingredient
- 53 Breakfast fruit
- 54 "How \_\_\_\_ it is!"
- 55 Slimy creature
- 56 Tower site
- 57 Agenda entry
- 59 Rainbow goddess
- 60 Religious sub-group
- 62 Rainbow's shape

Answers to Previous Crossword:

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | N | I | P | E | A | O | N | E | S | T | I | R |
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| A | B | A | C | I | D | R | E | A | M | L | A | N |
| L | I | Q | U | E | U | R | S | T | A | I | N | T |
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| S | M | O | C | K | T | O | M | A | T | O |   |   |
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| F | E | D | O | R | A | O | A | T | M | E | A | L |
| O | P | E | N | S | H | O | P | S | A | R | I | S |
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| L | E | S | S |   | D | O | T | Y |   | S | C | A |

# What music are you annoying about?

KATE WIDMER

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Everyone has music they're annoying about. Everyone. Whether you're actively a Swiftie or formerly a middle school emo, we've got some advice for you and your aux cord below.

**PISCES (FEB. 19-MARCH 20):** We get it, you're sappy. You can't help what you can't help. But listening to Mitski is a decision, not a compulsion, and the constant exposure is only worsening your emotional health. So, just to be clear: You're not betting on losing dogs, you're not retiring to the Salton Sea, there's no pearl in your head. But admittedly, by being in school you might be working for the knife. Maybe that song stays, but the rest should be sorted into the "emotional emergency" playlist for special melodramatic occasions.

**ARIES (MARCH 21-APRIL 19):** You've been sheepish about your playlists for years, which makes sense given how personal music can be. But we all know that's not why you've been avoiding the aux cord. Your middle school anime phase had a lasting impression on your music taste, but in fairness a lot of them are so, so good. Here's the trick: You get your friends into your favorite shows and then they're chill with it. That's how I got my friends to listen to "Again" by YUI in the car without them looking at me weird. Ganbatte!

**TAURUS (APRIL 20-MAY 20):** ENOUGH ABOUT CLAIRO. ENOUGH. We love you, but there's only so many times you can listen to "Sling" without falling asleep a little bit. "Charm" might have brought a necessary update to your playlists, but we encourage you to look beyond, sad indie girl music. Faye Webster is also banished. Try something a little more upbeat. Alvways, maybe?

**GEMINI (MAY 21-JUNE 20):** You're secretly a little too into Midwest emo. And that's okay. Really. It's cool in concept, even if it's often bad. Just because everyone around you winces at it doesn't mean it's inherently awful, right? If you're looking for something new, Hot Mulligan has the same emotional edge but is guitar-driven enough that your friends might forgive you for playing it in the car.

**CANCER (JUNE 21-JULY 22):** It's pop girlie season, and you've been riding the high for years now. Your playlists are neon, with the covers of "Short n' Sweet," "Rise and Fall of a Midwest Princess" and "Brat" providing backbeat to your otherwise relatively ordinary life. We just can't believe you haven't gotten sick of it. When you do, you should check out some of the pop princesses of the past, such as Whitney Houston or Madonna. You never know what you might find.

**LEO (JULY 23-AUG. 22):** Kendrick Lamar has more than earned his praise, no doubt about it. He won that Pulitzer Prize for a reason, as you are constantly reminding literally anyone within your vicinity. Not that we'd ever dream of criticizing him — we all know how that can go — but we're not above criticizing you. Instead of listening to "To Pimp

a Butterfly" for the millionth time, check out some of his collaborators. Or at least act like you did, for our sake.

**VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEP. 22):** Pop country is having a moment and you are on that shit! And for good reason, it's lots of fun.

That's why you're always bumping Shaboozey, Jelly Roll, Lainey Wilson and whoever else makes you daydream about your new boots. It's just that your friends are wishing for a little ... variety.

At some point the autotune-not-autotune vocals and constant reminder of Morgan Wallen's, existence can wear someone down. Maybe give Beyonce a try.

After all, "Cowboy Carter" did win best country album at the Grammys this year.

**LIBRA (SEP. 23-OCT. 22):** It's not your fault that you got into The Smiths at an age where you weren't aware what a "male manipulator" was, but it's a little bit your fault for still listening to them.

Genuine advice, if you're looking to solve your commitment issues, listen to something a little more encouraging, like Megan Thee Stallion. Confidence is key, but Morrissey's style of confidence is only going to get you into trouble.

**SCORPIO (OCT. 23-NOV. 21):** Yeah, we saw you twitch at the mention of Hot Topic, don't even start. In middle school, it may have been a phase, but if you're still listening to the emo quartet My Chemical Romance, Fall Out Boy, Panic! at the Disco and Twenty One Pilots at this age, then you're just going to have to admit to yourself that a full decade of this bullshit means pre-teen pop-punk might just be your actual adult music taste. Bet you even got your shoelaces from the president too.

**SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21):** Thrash metal rips, no question. That's why you never fucking turn it off. Subjecting your friends to yet another listen-through of "Master of Puppets" may be fun for you, but you've got to learn empathy for people whose ears aren't as attuned to male-anger soundtracks from the '80s. Give a new band a try! 200 Stab Wounds is a good "wholesome" starting point.

**CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 19):** Sadly, we must say it is so, you and your Weezer obsession have got to go. Okay rhyming aside, Weezer hasn't released an album that's good from front to back in 30 years, and you deserve to experience more that music has to offer. Check out The Beths. They're just as good at making power-pop anthems but with a female-fronted, emotionally-aware twist.

**AQUARIUS (JAN. 20-FEB. 18):** For someone that's constantly on an emotional rollercoaster, you need music that can match your every mood swing. Who does that better than Taylor Swift? From country to pop-punk to narrative melodrama to ditty radio pop songs, she's got you covered. But, because she's so universal, you've dug yourself into a musical hole. It's time to escape! Check out The Marias for the same level of pop writing but with a lot more bass (something Taylor has yet to experiment with).



BARRETT CLEMENT | MONTANA KAIMIN

# UM groundskeeping combats volatile winter

LOGAN YANTES

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The University of Montana's groundskeeping department is working to maintain campus safety amid recent weather fluctuations, including increased snowfall and lowered temperatures.

According to Dru Genger, a grounds department manager, their primary focus is ensuring accessible routes for all students and staff.

The groundskeeping team has prioritized routes on the Americans With Disabilities Act accessible map to ensure everyone can access buildings safely.

"Not every sidewalk is going to be clear, but there is going to be an ADA path to every building, every entrance," Genger said.

Groundskeeping meets every morning to lay out a plan for how they will tackle the day and keep up with the weather. Student employees and faculty go out every morning before classes, starting in rotating crews throughout the day and in different areas.

"There's no day that's the same," Emily Feiling said, a student employee in the department.

Student employees usually get to campus around 5:30 a.m. to start clearing, with UM faculty arriving an hour earlier. While faculty groundskeepers have access to vehicles and machines to aid them, students usually focus on footpaths.

Faculty use large gravel trucks for bigger sidewalks and smaller equipment is used for narrower paths, such as side-by-side plowers or the occasional snowblower, and sometimes spreading gravel by hand.

Despite this, some students believe that UM crews could be more thorough, including Jaelyn Riemenschneider, a student living at the Lewis and Clark apartments. She specifically pointed to the area around the Urey Lecture Hall.

"The area is so big that they might clear a little bit of it, but when students are walking or the path isn't big enough for two people to walk through, you have to go into the snow and that's a pain," Riemenschneider said.

The constant snowfall poses a significant challenge. UM uses a mixture of gravel, salt and shoveling to keep snow from piling up and becoming ice.

Salt is used sparingly, however.

"When it's snowing consistently, putting down ice melt would actually make it worse,

because it's going to melt it and it's just going to [become] a sheet of ice," Feiling said.

UM also avoids using salt on new concrete, including by the Duniway, Craig and Miller residence halls, to prevent damage before it has finished curing, which can take up to a year.

Adding salt before it fully cures can lead to significant cracking and chipping, as it interferes with the chemical process that hardens the concrete, significantly reducing longevity and lifespan.

Genger watched the window as large snowflakes drift outside. "If it is constantly snowing, we're just adding a layer of melted snow on top that just freezes. You're just chasing your tail all day," he said.

This year's weather is caused by several factors, but the two biggest are shifting oce-

anic currents and arctic air circulation.

Anomalies in pacific currents are cyclic in nature and have a name: El Nino or La Nina, depending on where it is in the cycle. In La Nina patterns, the current season, shifts in the Pacific Ocean surface temperatures are colder, which causes more moisture to be carried by the air and increases snow amounts.

This winter is especially wet and cold, with average precipitation for the month being twice the historical average and temperatures being eight degrees colder in Missoula, according to the National Weather Service.

Genger encouraged the campus community to report missed spots or specific needs.

"We'll come help them make their route a

little bit easier if we can," Genger said. "Just because a spot isn't clear is not because we just didn't want to do it. It's because we've got a lot of spots to hit."

Despite the challenges, Genger said the work is rewarding because people appreciate their efforts in maintaining safe pathways during the winter.

"Our number one priority is that all the students and staff and faculty are safe across campus, and we try our best to make sure that that's possible," Genger said.

*Logan Yantes is a news reporter for the Montana Kaimin and can be contacted at [logan.yantes@umontana.edu](mailto:logan.yantes@umontana.edu). For more stories from Yantes and other reporters, visit online at [montanakaimin.com](http://montanakaimin.com)*



George Sharbono and Emily Feiling pull out salt spreader and ice melt to run over some icy patches by the University Center on Feb 21.

RACHEL YEAGER | MONTANA KAIMIN

# How period poverty affects students

SABRINA PHILIP

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For those who experience a lack of access to menstrual products, period poverty is often seen as a shameful and secret weakness that is too embarrassing to discuss. This is no different for students at the University of Montana.

Period poverty is defined as a lack of access to basic hygiene supplies, including pads, tampons, menstrual cups and more, due to their high cost. The high cost is often attributed to the pink tax, which is when products that are typically for women are usually more expensive.

According to a 2015 study done by the Department of Consumer Affairs in New York, hygiene products for women are on average 13% more expensive than men's. Experts attribute this increase in price to discrimination on the basis of gender.

Experiencing a lack of menstrual products can happen at any age, even before one goes to college. This was the case for Morgan Speicher, a junior from Utah studying media arts.

Her experience started when she was home visiting her family over Christmas, and her card declined while trying to buy the cheapest box of tampons.

"It was the worst moment because I'm sitting there in the grocery store and everybody's in line watching me as I'm trying to buy this cheap box of tampons, and I can't afford it," Speicher said. "I remember just having to leave."

The stigma around periods and the embarrassment that accompanies them adds to the silence around period poverty. It can also cause trauma that turns a period into something to dread.

"I remember I went and visited my dad's work being like, 'Hey, I need money to buy tampons,'" Speicher said. "I feel like that was the most humbling experience ever. It was not something I think anybody really wants to ask their parents. I remember being super emotionally torn up about it."

According to Kat Cowley, the director of ASUM Bear Necessities, the program tries to fight this problem on campus by providing free period supplies, including tampons and pads. It also partners with



Feminine hygiene products available in the UM Food Pantry on Feb. 6. HENRY DOELLINGER | MONTANA KAIMIN

organizations to provide reusable options, including period cups and discs, reusable pads and more.

According to Tayli Hillyard, engagement coordinator at the Office of Sustainability, period poverty can deeply affect people and cause them to miss out on parts of their lives. "A lot of people, or those in poverty, have to stay home while they're menstruating," Hillyard said. "And so, if you don't have access to proper hygiene products, then think about it: You're missing four days a month of school."

This lack of access can affect women in a big way, setting them back in life as their daily routine becomes defined by their menstrual cycle.

According to a report from Thinx & PERI-

OD from 2023, nearly one in four students have struggled to afford period products. "I think when we hear period poverty, many picture a third world country, but it absolutely happens right here in Montana," Cowley said.

This lack of awareness, in turn, prevents possible solutions from being debated and implemented. This is why, according to Speicher, it is more important than ever to be aware of the problem and erase the stigma.

"You shouldn't have to feel embarrassed about needing to have access to these products," Speicher said. "I think the University has done an excellent job about providing them, and pretty much in every bathroom. I like it a lot."

According to Hillyard, the solution is

to normalize periods and make them a topic that is usual and unshameful. In short, destigmatizing the awkwardness around the topic would most likely lead to productivity in finding a remedy, alleviating this problem for all those who experience period poverty.

"You are not a bad person for having a period," Hillyard said.

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# FREELING



*Tele  
part  
UM T*

**ABOVE:** Stella Dustman, UM Telemark Club vice president, descends Firewater, a black diamond run at Teton Pass Ski Area. **RIGHT:** Club member Cora Stone smiles as her glitter shimmers in the sunshine at the ski area.



# THE HEEL

*Telemark racing used to be a vibrant part of Missoula's ski community, the Telemark club helped revitalize it.*



Story by Riley Comstock | Photos by Marley Barboeisel

**O**N A SNOWY WEDNESDAY evening, Lucy Decker's house filled with her fellow club members. They trickled in, ski gear in hand, wearing canvas pants and flat brim hats, puffy jackets and floral print accessories. Blundstone shoes littered the entryway. But beyond their clothing they all had one thing in common: They were telemark skiers.

Decker, the president of the University of Montana Telemark Club, hosted the wax and pizza night. The following night, the skiers would tackle a different challenge as they began the fourth set in a six-series telemark ski race.

The living room boasted the laid back vibe of a skier who loved nothing more than getting out in the mountains on the weekend. A Trampled by Turtles poster illuminated by soft orange lights seemed to put everyone at ease. Costco pizzas littered the kitchen counter next to a huge bottle of ranch.

As the skiers mingled and discussed the past three races, they carried a cheerful buzz, happy to take a break from the stress of the spring semester.

In the detached garage, folks tightened their skis in vices and dripped hot wax onto the bottoms of their skis, smoothing it out and scraping the excess off in order to glide over the snow better. They would need as much speed as possible to do well the next night.

The Missoula Telemark Challenge, also nicknamed "tele races," are a set of five Thursday nights and one Friday night in

January and February where telemark skiers come together to race one-on-one down a steep slalom course bordered by moguls and jumps on both sides. After, skiers are paired against the person with the closest time and the races start over again the next week.

Telemark skiing is a niche form of skiing where the binding only locks the skiers toe down, leaving their heel free to lift — a change from the fully locked-in style of alpine, or downhill, skiing. Turns are made by lunging forward, so the front knee is bent and the back heel lifts up.

A senior from Petaluma, California, Decker joined the telemark club as a freshman. Back then, the club was in its infancy.

"There were three of us, and I didn't really know what I was getting into at the time, but there was a lot of energy and a lot of passion for it," Decker, now a senior, said.

Throughout her four years at the University of Montana, she grew the club from a few daring folks to a group of over 100 students, and helped to bolster the number of racers in the telemark challenge. But expanding the club wasn't the only positive outcome of her hard work.

In just a few short weeks, the club would take over Teton Pass outside of Choteau, Montana, for a day of exclusively telemark skiing. It was a chance to bring the vibrant, but small, community in Montana together.

But first, they had to race.

## *The club begins*

Lit by a bright white bulb, Decker's garage was the epicenter of the waxing night. One wall was hidden behind a wide array of skis and boots. New and old, narrow and wide, every color of the rainbow and every length imaginable was on display. The skis carried a quiet, welcoming feeling for newer club members looking to get started.

Over the course of the season, the club lends out almost 50 pairs of skis to anyone who wants to try telemark skiing.

The ski collection in Decker's garage had been building since club co-founder Owen Darro graduated from UM three years ago.

Darro first started telemark skiing in 2007. As soon as he heard about the races, he was in. At that time, the Challenge was in a lull. Darro saw potential for an infusion of college energy. He started reaching out to people, seeking gear donations for the fledgling group.

"I think my partner and I went away for a week to go backpacking and I came back and there were like six or seven boxes of boots on the doorstep and like five pairs of skis," Darro said.

While Darros' donation created a solid foundation, plenty more skis were bought with club funds at local shops for cheap. Even more had been donated from locals and far out tele-skiers

who wanted to support the club.

“People are not only providing them locally, they are legitimately shipping them from the East Coast for us,” Decker said.

Darro started the club right before COVID-19, foiling his plans at getting it off its feet. It would be a full year before he could take club members out on the hill. But the lockdown didn’t stop him from planning.

“I think it gave us enough time to really create a formula to get people out on snow and just have fun,” Darro said.

Darros’ efforts helped get college students participating in the challenge after the pandemic. As the older generations of skiers ebbed and flowed in their participation, newcomers infused a new lifeblood into a culture that, according to volunteer race organizer Alli DePuy, has long held a welcoming vibe.

“The University has had such a vibrant leadership community that you just want to be part of it,” DePuy said.

In the fall, the club hosts an event where they give out skis to interested club members to borrow for the winter.

Every Thursday, students drive up the long, windy road to Snowbowl, where the races are held. On the second week of February, the themed fourth race had skiers turning up in denim outfits. But the double-denim of their Canadian tuxedos didn’t stop them from shredding the hill.

While many racers complained the course was a bit icy, they pushed through. The races started at the top of the T-bar, a lift that pulls skiers to the top of the ski run. Once it was their turn, a volunteer counted them down and the skiers took off, weaving through gates, two poles with a flag that connected them.

As they flew down the hill, around the gates and through the final timing check, skiers and supporters cheered.

Alongside exercise and community, the Challenge gives students a fun opportunity to mingle with other skiers who have been racing for years.

Officially starting back in 1983 with a highly dedicated group of telemark skiers, the races have existed for decades of history. Todd Frank has been there for almost all of it.

Frank started telemark skiing when he came to UM in the early ‘80s. Back then, telemark equipment looked quite different.

“The gear was pretty primitive, my first pair of tele skis were essentially just metal edged cross country skis,” Frank said.

While telemark gear can be less expensive, it can still be difficult for students to buy. Today, older skis often get donated or sold at lower prices. But, since the telemark skis hold up longer and better than downhill skis, they still have plenty of life in them.

Frank said the first races were at Mount Fuji on Lolo pass. He was part of the initial group of skiers in the mid ‘80s that participated in the small event. Back then, it was put on by the owners of Trailhead Sports, a local outdoor gear shop. After spending a few years



Freshman Cyrus Struckman flies past a gate in a sport coat for the ‘tele prom’ themed race during an evening at Snowbowl Ski Area.

in Whitefish, Frank came back to Missoula and got a job at Trailhead. He was put in charge of the races, and eventually, bought the shop in the ‘90s.

As the years went on, Frank saw the races grow in number. He remembers late nights holed up in the Snowbowl lodge, calculating race results on a computer for over 150 skiers. Those days, he wouldn’t leave the hill until the wee hours of the morning.

Frank eventually bowed out of managing the races, but people still flocked to them every Thursday night. The thrill of having a free heel brought plenty of folks in, but there was another aspect of telemark skiing that kept them coming back: the culture.

## Dropping the knee

For the fifth week’s theme, racers sported frilly tutus and unicorn horns. As the fastest racers hurled through the gates, onlookers whooped in excitement at the tight turns on the steep, dark slopes above the lodge.

While some might have thought racing in a fluffy skirt with a bright unicorn horn strapped to their helmet is silly, it was another electric Thursday night for the racers.

Telemark skiing isn’t just physically different from alpine skiing. Some skiers say it also promotes a different culture. Alpine ski culture

can sometimes be seen as exclusive and competitive, Alianza Zwang said. A report from Skimag estimated the total cost for a family of four to ski at five of the most popular resorts in America. It found costs ranged from \$818 to \$1,341.

The Kaimin compared the costs of downhill skis versus telemark skis via online websites and found no marginal difference between the two.

“It’s a country club sport, like that’s what alpine skiing is at the end of the day,” Zwang said

A freshman from Bozeman who studies philosophy, Zwang has been alpine skiing since she was little. As a kid, she often protested against her parents for making her go. But soon enough, they would have to drag her down from the mountain.

Zwang first joined the telemark club when some of her friends decided to try it. She figured it would be a fun challenge to alpine skiing.

“It’s completely opposite, it’s very weird. I’m not going to lie, I still can’t figure out how

to bend my front leg,” Zwang said before the fourth race.

But she stuck with it, telemark skiing during the races and going out with friends. She quickly found herself leaning into the club’s positive energy.

“The fact that it’s still going as strong as it is is a testament to [the] fact that it is welcoming. I think there’s a lot of people who have never tele-skied before and are obviously comfortable enough to go do that,” Zwang said.

The culture of telemark skiing is marked by an inviting atmosphere, a willingness to help other skiers and an enthusiasm for free heels. It’s a culture Decker has been working to preserve.

In one of her first times at Snowbowl for the Challenge, Decker’s boot buckle broke, a severe setback for racing.

“Someone immediately was like ‘I got a pair, just borrow these for the rest of the season,’ and I was like ‘I don’t even know who you are,’” Decker said.

Several years later, Decker got a chance to

**“To want to get into telemark skiing you have to take a step back and accept you might not be the best skier: You might look like a dumbass.”**

— Owen Darro, UM Telemark Skiing Club co-founder

pay that welcoming energy forward. After her boots broke again, she found herself sitting out the fifth race. When one of the club members came down the mountain with a busted binding, rendering his skis unusable, she immediately offered to let him borrow hers.

Decker's effort to make sure people have fun while skiing is part of what grew the club in the past few years. And growth was exactly what the races needed.

It's hard to say exactly what caused the decline in telemark skiing. DePuy, one of the volunteer race organizers and a longtime telemark skier, has a theory that looks over to telemark's more expensive cousin.

"I think that's when tele started declining: When the AT gear got really good," DePuy said.

AT stands for alpine touring, which is typically done in backcountry settings. Alpine touring gear allows skiers to have a free heel while they traverse up the hill, then they can lock it down on the descent.

"We've had a bad spell, where numbers have been in the 30s and 20s," said Thomas Fogarty, who has been racing since 1996.

But the telemark skiing decline seems to be coming to an end. Recent infusions of interested skiers, many of them college students, pushed the number of racers back up.

"This year we had over 90 people register to participate," DePuy said.

DePuy doesn't necessarily think having a smaller race is a bad thing. "You would be here 'till midnight, no questions asked, you were exhausted," she said. "I don't mind 80-100 [skiers]. I think it's perfect, it's a great range."

Another likely reason for the decline is the sports' older demographic, DePuy said.

"Telemarking is not super easy on your body," DePuy said.

Elsah Bechtold, a senior studying environmental science and the club's treasurer, said she didn't use to see so many younger telemark skiers.

Bringing in more racers had a lot to do with marketing and reaching out for sponsorships, Decker said.

This year, the club was sponsored by Bishop Telemark, a Colorado-based company that exclusively produces telemark equipment. The company sent the club five pairs of skis to use for this year's races.

While Decker solidified the club's status, she also raised its next generation. Stella Dustman, an environmental studies, French and sustainable science and practice major, is learning the ropes and helping run the club, following in Decker's footsteps.

Similar to Zwang's experience, she wasn't always into the idea of skiing. "I can't always say I was happy to ski when I was younger," Dustman said. But her parents didn't give up. "It was like a big, big part of our family tradition."

Growing up in Park City, surrounded by mountains and snow, she was forced to learn whether she liked it or not. Her dad telemarked for her whole childhood, but she always



**TOP:** Reed Cotthaus refines the edges of a ski after wazing his girlfriend's skis in a Missoula garage. Cotty's girlfriend, Elsay Bechtold, is the UM Telemark Club's treasurer. **BOTTOM:** Telemark Club member Ephraim Mortenson wins a leg wrestling match to determine the season's overall team winner at the Snowbowl lodge.

thought it looked hard.

"I knew at some point I would break into it in my life, I just didn't know when," Dustman said.

Once she got to Missoula she knew it was her time. "I heard about the tele club, and I was like 'This is my time, this is when I'm gonna challenge myself.'"

Dustman said she struggled while learning to telemark ski because she doesn't remember learning to ski when she was younger. But she was up for the challenge.

"It was really cool and super empowering and humbling to learn something that was already so ingrained in you, but in a different way," Dustman said.

As the vice president, Dustman has been helping Decker and Bechtold envision the path

forward for the club and its message to people.

"I just think it's super cool to be able to do something that you've never done before and push yourself, and you don't have to be good at it, that's such a beautiful thing," Dustman said.

All that effort would come to a head during the last race of the series.

## Turning tele

The final race on Feb. 21 allowed students one last chance to race their friends down the gates. A recent warm weather spell had thawed the top layer of snow, but racers were still in good spirits. Bishop Telemark brought skis for people to try out.

Plenty of spectators showed up to watch the prom-themed competition. The race list was

packed. Fans let out yips and rang cowbells from the timing shed. Awkward suits, long dresses and capes flapped in the wind as skiers hurtled over the slushy terrain.

There was a lingering excitement that Friday night. In two short days, many of them would be heading north to Choteau, Montana, for a one of a kind event: An entire ski resort rented out just for telemark skiing.

Bechtold had previously mentioned the idea of renting out the Teton Pass ski resort to the leadership team.

"I kind of just threw it out there," Bechtold said, "It's a small hill in Montana that could definitely use the support."

Nobody was really sure if the event could actually happen. They decided they would wait until the club had a fundraiser to see if it would be feasible. The fundraiser brought in nearly \$10,000 in over a month, according to Decker. The amount was a pleasant surprise, and got them one step closer to renting out a mountain.

Bechtold texted the owner of Teton Pass, a longtime family friend, and then set it up. Renting out the hill cost about \$6,500.

"We really wanted an opportunity to give back to everyone that supported us, because truly we would not be here without them," Decker said.

The event featured telemark-only access. Only people who had telemark bindings could go on the lift. Bishop Telemark brought a full demo fleet of skis for people to try. The club brought in a DJ, and the resort kept its bar open late.

The ambitious takeover allowed like minded people to come together and share their joy of telemark skiing. People love telemark for all different reasons. For many, it's the challenge of learning.

"I feel like especially in that age group that are in university, their whole identity is that they're an excellent skier," Darro said. "To want to get into telemark skiing you have to take a step back and accept you might not be the best skier: You might look like a dumbass."

Dustman loved the challenge of learning to telemark, but for her, there's another appeal. "For me it's kind of all about people that are doing it. You wanna be with them, you want to do what they're doing because they're rad," she said.

Decker still feels like the sense of community that brought her in is one of the sport's strongest assets.

"I think it's the community around it, I just couldn't see it die, I think it's so supportive," Decker said. "With telemark skiing you really appreciate the turns, you appreciate the technique. It makes me think about where I am and puts me in my time and place."

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# 'Emilia Perez:' a masterclass in misrepresentation

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Ask anyone who has seen "Emilia Perez" and they'll tell you, it sure is a movie. It's not a good movie, nor is it a good representation of the communities it seeks to portray, but it definitely is a studio-backed, feature-length film. That's about where the compliments end.

"Emilia Perez" has been in the cultural zeitgeist for a little while now, but if you've managed to avoid the chaos, it's Netflix's latest attempt at a serious crime drama, one that happens to be focused on a drug kingpin that transitions to a woman and restarts her life as an activist. It's made in Spanish but directed by a French guy who doesn't speak the language. Oh, and it's a musical. If all of that's got your hackles raised, you're not alone.

While consensus is generally negative, "Emilia Perez" isn't without its enjoyers. It won the Jury Prize at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival. TIME magazine called it one of its favorite films of 2024, and it took home four Golden Globes last month. It's clear that the people who like "Emilia Perez" really like it, and the people who hate it, really, really hate it.

Much of the online discourse about the film has centered on the potentially harmful implications of its plot and its representation of marginalized groups. While there was a lot of initial award-show buzz about the supposed diversity of the film, leading it to shatter the record for foreign film with most Oscar nominations, that quickly faded away when people actually watched the film and discovered its contents.

Those Oscar nominations seemingly don't mean much anymore, given the controversy that's been swirling around the film. In addition to audience concerns about representation, old tweets from lead actress Karla Sofia Gascón have surfaced, and they're not great. The tweets are from 2019-2021, and featured Islamophobia, anti-Black racism and anti-vax sentiments such as a tweet from Aug. 2020 that reads, "The Chinese vaccine, apart from the mandatory chip, comes with two spring rolls, a cat that moves its hand, two plastic flowers, a pop-up lantern, three telephone lines and one euro for your first controlled purchase." "Emilia Perez" is already a hard-sell of a film, and Gascón's tweets only served to widen the controversy to those who might not have heard of it

otherwise.

There's a lot of elements to the film that feel off, but the dialogue is one of the most jarring. It's commonly said by people that actually speak Spanish that it feels unnatural and stilted, with some people suggesting it'd been fed through Google Translate. This discourse is how Latiné Student Union president Ruby Lopez found the film.

"[Mexican actor] Eugenio Derbez criticized Selena Gomez, saying she doesn't understand what she's saying, which makes her performance lack nuance," Lopez said.

Selena Gomez, who plays the titular character's wife, became a lightning rod for conversation regarding the authenticity of the Spanish spoken in the film. According to Lopez, Derbez retracted his comment and apologized. "But having seen bits of the movie, the Spanish still sounds weird," Lopez said.

The poor representation of Mexico is only part of the complaints about the film. Many have noted the unfortunate implications of the central plot. "It almost gives the impression that trans women are inherently manipulative," said Camille Wagner, a second-year double major in acting and criminology. "Emilia should be conveyed in a more negative light, but if she was depicted as a villain, it would be further contributing to the stereotypes that we've seen time and time again for trans people."

It's not enough for the media to simply have characters from diverse backgrounds, those portrayals need to be well-researched and respectfully portrayed. According to Jules Jensen, a junior acting major who identifies as a trans woman, good representation in media is really important.

"It gives something to strive towards," Jensen said. "It gives an ability to see yourself past what you currently are, which is one of the most important parts of life."

Beyond bad representation, consensus seems to be that "Emilia Perez" is just bad. Wagner offered a laundry list of the way the film failed on a technical level: the songs are unsatisfying and untheatrical, they feel like they pop up randomly and they're often sung poorly. The lyrics are bad, "like, bad bad," she said. If you're morbidly curious, look up "Le Vaginoplasty," the now viral English-language song about gender-affirming surgery and Wagner's pick for worst song in the film. Use headphones; there's a lot of loud "penis!" and "vagina!" refrains.

Ultimately, "Emilia Perez" was probably

always doomed to fail. "I feel like if they were to have researched and gotten better representation, the film would have a completely different premise," Wagner said.

For what it's worth, Wagner noted that putting more effort into the music could have helped the film — but not save it. "So many movie musicals lately have been half-hearted attempts," she said.

She theorized this might be producers trying to hide behind the genre to improve marketability. That might be misguided, though, because in her opinion, audiences love musicals, even if they don't realize it. "In the same vein of how the children yearn for the mines, the public yearns for musicals," Wagner joked.

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# Students take an Earnest approach to directing famous Oscar Wilde play

ELIZA CAREY

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Two brand-new Master of Fine Arts in Directing candidates took on the satirically famous, “The Importance of Being Earnest” by Oscar Wilde at the University of Montana’s School of Theater and Dance. Christopher Kehoe directed act one, Chae Clearwood directed act two, and the pair collaborated for act three.

Bernadette Sweeney, the head of the School of Theater and Dance, only admits two new MFA Directing candidates every three years. In the second semester of their first year, they are assigned a small, one act studio play to direct, but this year, Sweeney had them do things a little differently.

Kehoe is from Minneapolis. His experience is in physical theater, which is a technique that uses physical movement to tell a story. But he came to campus in the fall to get his MFA in directing as a career pivot.

“I literally don’t know of any other MFA



Members of the production crew monitor lighting and audio as Dashiell Schindler (left) and Cubby Rodda (right) practice their roles as Algernon and Lane during a Feb. 19 rehearsal for the upcoming “The Importance of Being Earnest” production. **HENRY DOELLINGER | MONTANA KAIMIN**

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Behind the scenes

directing program that provides the opportunity for candidates to direct for main stage productions in their first year,” Kehoe said. “This is unheard of.”

Kehoe said this opportunity is an innovative way to get them directing on the main stage in their first year. Technically, they’re still only directing one act pieces, they just happen to be in the same play.

Clearwood grew up in Billings and has a background in vocals and musical theater.

“Working on a main-stage production gives us a chance to be in the design room, so we can be in on those conversations and decisions,” Clearwood said.

Sweeney oversaw their work to make sure they were very present in each other’s rehearsals to ensure continuity. Clearwood and Kehoe established dynamics between characters in their assigned acts, and Sweeney said she used their prior work to put act three “on its feet.”

“Their skills are very complimentary and supportive of each other, so this has been a blast,” Sweeney said.

“What’s been really cool to learn is how to allow space for mentorship for undergrad students and help with theater being educational,” Clearwood said. “The biggest thing for me is to allow these actors at different places in their majors to feel involved in the production of the show, you know, not just making it a dictatorship.”

The play follows Jack Worthing, a country gentleman, who creates a fictional “wicked” brother named Ernest as an excuse to escape to London where he pursues Gwendolen Fairfax, a woman who is obsessed with the name Ernest. Meanwhile, his friend Algernon Moncrieff also adopts a fake identity, “Bunbury,” to escape social obligations, leading to a series of comedic misunderstandings when both men fall in love with the other’s ward.

Ultimately, it is revealed that Jack is actually the long-lost son of Lady Bracknell, meaning his real name is indeed “Ernest,” allowing the couples to finally marry.

Sweeney said the directors have done a great job teaching their actors how to serve the quick-witted humor in this play.

“It’s such a funny show and Wilde is Irish, and I’m Irish, too,” Sweeney said.

*Opening night is Feb. 27 and runs through March 9. Tickets are available through GrizTix.*

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# Griz men's tennis' Norwegian weapon

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Baltazar Wiger-Nordas was only around 6 years old when he picked up tennis while his family spent a year and a half in Australia on an extended holiday.

While the sport of tennis was not big in his home country of Norway, it was quite popular in Australia. Upon his return to Bergen, the second largest city in Norway, Wiger-Nordas couldn't see himself putting down the racket.

"I had a little bit of talent for it and I really liked doing it," Wiger-Nordas said. "Eventually I couldn't quit."

Now a junior at the University of Montana, Wiger-Nordas is one of the top tennis players for the Griz men's team, who are looking to be a top contender in the Big Sky Conference this year.

Wiger-Nordas was awarded Big Sky player of the week in tennis after Montana's first ever win at the Air Force Academy, beating the team 5-2 on Feb. 8. A 2-0 sweep highlighted the game at Metropolitan State University of Denver in Colorado Springs.

Wiger-Nordas continues to show his talent throughout the season, helping the Griz be undefeated in its eight appearances so far this spring. His journey to the Big Sky has been interesting, but it's one many foreign tennis athletes go through.

Numerous differences exist between the tennis culture in Europe and America, but one of the most striking is that there are non-club college sports across the pond. In fact, there are not even high school sports.

Wiger-Nordas spent his youth training at the Paradise Tennis Club. The experience for him was very different from most American students. Instead of playing with teammates, he often trained individually.

"The last few years in my home city were kind of rough because there weren't too many players," Wiger-Nordas said. Owing to the sport's relatively small culture, most players were younger than him.

He dominated in Norway, winning a junior-level International Tennis Federation tournament and several titles in Norwegian tennis championships. He was a three-time national team champion with his club from 2019 to 2021.

Despite not having many other people to play with, Wiger-Nordas never wanted to give up.

"Everybody has this 'I don't want to continue, I want to quit' for short periods of time, but I never had that for long periods of time," he said. "I always wanted to play. I always loved playing tennis. It didn't really make sense to quit."



Baltazar Wiger-Nordas plays doubles in practice at PEAK Racquet Club on Feb. 19. Wiger-Nordas won two tournament titles in the fall, one of the best seasons in program history. **NOAH EPPS | MONTANA KAIMIN**

Despite his success in Norway, he knew he would have to leave. Wiger-Nordas wanted to play in college, and hopefully at a higher level, and that just wasn't in the cards if he stayed in Norway or other parts of Europe.

"Your choice is either turn professional or you're done with tennis," said Jason Brown, the Griz men's tennis head coach.

So while Wiger-Nordas had grown his love for the racket sport at home, much like how he discovered tennis, he left to pursue it further.

For European players, many work closely with talent scouts of sorts. These are folks who know many coaches and help to bridge the gap between the continents for players and coaches alike.

Wiger-Nordas knew a few people who went to UM and through an agent, he worked his way toward Missoula. He received advice from fellow tennis players who said UM could be good for him.

"I had a couple guys who I halfway knew before who went to this program and were like, 'Yeah, you want to come here. You're gonna have a great time here,'" Wiger-Nordas said.

Few powerhouses come into college ready to dominate, and Wiger-Nordas was no exception. His transition from Norway to the United States was difficult.

"This happens to a lot of international students," Brown said. "They don't understand the competitiveness at [this] level and the amount of training."

While Wiger-Nordas had been making his way in Scandinavia, all that success didn't completely prepare him for Montana. He hadn't played on a team where he depended on and helped others before. He hadn't expe-

rienced being the lower-ranking player who might get stuck with odd jobs.

"I wasn't very good at accepting it as a freshman. I wanted to be one of the bigger guys," he said.

His coach noticed it, too.

Brown said the team has 10 to 12 training sessions a week and it can be tough for athletes to adapt.

"He was probably doing like two a week at home in Norway, so it's a huge shock to the system," Brown said.

But that didn't stop him from continuing to advance. His "just can't quit" mindset got him training and persevering. In that first year, Wiger-Nordas said he didn't play a ton, which was discouraging. But then he flipped the switch.

"I saw how fun it was for the guys who were

winning, I mean, I wanted to be a part of that," Wiger-Nordas said.

After that moment, through a decent-but-not-extraordinary freshman year, he started to excel.

"I remember the tangible moment halfway through spring semester of his freshman year, he sort of figured it out," Brown said. "From then on, he hasn't looked back. He went from literally not playing much as a freshman to starting his sophomore season as our number one player, and he's stayed near the top ever since."

During the preseason in the fall of 2024, Wiger-Nordas dominated, going 10-2 in his singles matches. He won the local championship at the PEAK Racquet Club, where the team practices, and put up an impressive number of wins at the Gonzaga Invitational.

Now, as a junior, he has helped the Griz stay on top of the season. The team is looking to its first conference matchup March 7 against Sacramento State University to show the conference what it is made of.

As Wiger-Nordas continues to progress, his love of the sport does too. As a child he dreamt big.

"When I was little, there was always this dream of playing on the pro tour. When you're a kid, you can dream that you can do big things," Wiger-Nordas said.

He acknowledges that being on the pro tour might not be realistic now, but he still loves the game.

I still have a lot of fun playing the sport and I'm 15 years into playing it. It's brought me a lot of joy," Wiger-Nordas said.

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# Griz basketball controls destiny to Big Sky pennant

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Montana basketball head coach Travis DeCuire brought in the largest class of transfers in team history last offseason, which, alongside rising returners, has rocketed the team to a 13-2 conference record.

The team only needs to win all their remaining games to guarantee its first seed in the Big Sky Conference while eleventh-year coach DeCuire is a sole win away from becoming the winningest coach in team history.

"Us all being new was something we could bond about," junior guard Malik Moore said. "I think that's what's helped us on the court, being such a tight-knit group."

Potent offense, as DeCuire stated in a recent press conference, was somewhat expected from such a large and talented transfer class. But he really knew the team was trending in the right direction in late November, when it put up a stout defense against California State University, Northridge. The Griz won 83-75, something it has built off since showing continued improvement through conference play.

Posting two steals and putting up 22 points in that game was Moore, who leads the team in minutes and scoring average this year while being just one basket short of 50 threes on the season. His current average of 13.7 points a game is nearly double what he posted during his two prior seasons at Pepperdine University, something the guard credits to DeCuire's coaching and the depth of the team's offense.

One of eight transfers this year, Kai Johnson, hasn't skipped a beat coming up from Division II Western Washington University, roughly equalling Moore in points thanks to playing a few more games and leading the team in steals. Sacramento State University transfer Austin Patterson provides crucial depth, sinking 31 threes, coming off the bench.

Another transfer, Joe Prigden, who recently committed to his sixth year of basketball and second with the Griz, has also been a player to watch this season, leading the team in points and bringing invaluable experience.

"It's never about the individual or the stats," Prigden said. "It's always been about winning for us."

Few wins are sweeter than a Griz-Cat game and many of the new players have expressed the enjoyment and excitement of winning the first game of the rivalry before



**LEFT:** Malik Moore, a junior guard for the Griz, is tossed the ball as he rushes across the top of the key in the game against Weber State on Feb. 15. The Griz won the game 65-58. **RIGHT:** Moore jumps to block the shot of Weber State player Trevor Hennig. The Griz's victory against Weber State was its eighth straight win, placing the team at the top of the Big Sky Conference. **NOAH EPPS | MONTANA KAIMIN**

heading into their second on the road which they won 89-85 on Feb. 24th.

"The first time around they really did not know exactly what it was they were getting into. Now, they know," DeCuire said in a press conference prior to the game. "This time, they won't be loved. They'll be hated."

The Griz possess players who are familiar with the rivalry, such as the team's sole returning starter from last year, Brandon Whitney. He has started all 28 games and made contributions in every facet of the game with 78 assists and 21 steals.

Te'jon Sawyer also returns as a successful transfer story and key bench player

from last year. He's gone from starting only two games last year to 26 this season.

Additionally, last year's outstanding rookie Money Williams has stepped into a far greater role, making 49 threes and putting up the most points on the team while being a key distributor and all around clutch player.

When it comes to the path to the Big Sky Tournament, the Griz currently sit on top with three games remaining and a 13-2 record, with 13-3 Northern Colorado University close behind. The team has already guaranteed themselves a bye-week and a top two seed.

DeCuire has won two tournaments

during his tenure, both in which the Griz came in as a first seed, and the most recent was 2019 where it lost in the NCAA March Madness tournament in the first round.

Down the stretch, Griz Basketball needs to win its last three games and push its winning streak to twelve to guarantee the first seed in the tournament and the regular season title.

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# School day on ice

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY **DIEGO HERNANDEZ**  
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Colorful tents littered the frozen lake and the smell of hotdogs mixed with propane filled the cold air as students gathered around small holes in the ice at Georgetown Lake.

On the morning of Feb. 22, students from the three universities trudged their way through snow on the ice-covered lake to sit, fish and enjoy the company of other students as part of the annual Brawl of the Wild on Ice.

The Brawl of the Wild on Ice is a multi-school event hosted by the Backcountry Hunters and Anglers Clubs of the University of Montana, Montana State University and Montana Technological University.

The BHA is a national organization dedicated to “ensur[ing] North America’s outdoor heritage of hunting and fishing in a natural setting, through education and work on behalf of wild public lands, waters, and wildlife,” according to the BHA website. The UM, MSU and Montana Tech chapters all work closely together to create outdoor activities for Montana students.

“It’s a day on the ice. We gather and get to network with like-minded people while we all learn how to ice fish,” Amory Kindle said, a 19-year-old from Salida, Colorado. Kindle is a freshman in UM’s ecosystem and restoration program and president of the UM Backcountry Hunters and Anglers chapter. “It’s just an opportunity to stave off cabin fever and get out in the open air with good views and good people.”

It was an event to socialize as much as it was to fish. “It’s just good times, friends and laughs,” said Peter Robinson, a freshman environmental science and sustainability major at UM and a new member of the BHA. “We aren’t catching many fish, but it’s still a blast to be out here.”

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**TOP:** Reagan Golden sits away from the group on the frozen Georgetown Lake as she waits for a fish to find her bait on Feb.22.

**BOTTOM LEFT:** Amory Kindle uses a knife to cook hotdogs on a small propane stove in one of the igloo tents.

**BOTTOM RIGHT:** Golden holds a 15-inch rainbow trout pulled from the icy depths of Georgetown Lake during the Brawl of the Wild on Ice.

