

MONTANA KAIMIN

FLIPPING THROUGH THE U.M. PLAYBOOK



**STORY BY
HANNAH BENITEZ
PHOTOS BY
MONTANA
KAIMIN**

After leading the Griz for 14 years, Bobby Hauck's retirement as head coach launched the University of Montana into a new era of football.



6 PRESIDENT WANTED

12 BEST OF DOC FEST

14 INCOMING HOT STREAK

FEBRUARY 26, 2026 | VOLUME 128 | ISSUE NO. 19

Kiosk



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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For comments, corrections or letters to the editor, contact
elle.daniel@umontana.edu
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COVER PHOTO:
University of Montana
football head coach Bobby
Hauck coaches the defense
at the beginning of practice
in Washington-Grizzly
Stadium on Oct. 27, 2020.
SARA DIGGINS |
MONTANA KAIMIN
ARCHIVE

POLITICAL CARTOON



KAIMIN KOMICS: SE 3 EP 11



If we forget history, we are doomed to repeat it

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Medium

Edited by Margie E. Burke

			5					
		6		7		8		
1			8			5	6	
	2							4
	4							3
7			3	5				
				4				
				8	2	1		
3		5	2	1			6	

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:

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

The Trump administration ordered National Park Service staff to change or remove signs and exhibits in several locations in January.

These actions didn't come out of nowhere. On March 27, 2025, President Donald Trump announced his executive order titled "Restore truth and sanity to American history," which targeted the nation's museums, parks and landmarks.

Almost a year later, Americans are beginning to see the extent to which the federal administration is willing to go in order to censor the messages and facts that do not align with their own.

The executive order reads, "Americans have witnessed a concerted and widespread effort to rewrite our Nation's history, replacing objective facts with a distorted narrative driven by ideology rather than truth."

According to the Washington Post, Glacier National Park was flagged by National Park Service workers in compliance with the task Interior Secretary Doug Burgum. The flagged items include a series of displays with information regarding climate change,

including a brochure that shows images of glaciers retreating and human-caused climate change, a video that refers to disappearing glaciers and an informational display explaining issues with air pollution in the national park. Though there is still an online location to view this information, Glacier was given two options from the federal administration: change the signs or remove them.

Farther east in Montana, the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument has an exhibit that mentioned the promises the United States had broken with Native Americans and discussed the Native American boarding schools that erased cultural identity and language. It was flagged as not being compliant, according to the Washington Post.

Montana is not the only state instructed to bend and fold to the preferences of the federal administration. Earlier this month, the federal government removed an exhibit about the nine people enslaved by George Washington at Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia, and the permanent exhibit at Brown v. Board of Education National Historical Park in Kansas was flagged for mentioning "equity."

With the removal of historical information on the Battle of the Little Bighorn and research and peer-reviewed information on climate change, we are losing access to information that is important for understanding our country's history and how to preserve our planet in the future.

Growing up, I was always taught that those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it. When censoring the views and historical knowledge of those who were most affected, we are choosing to forget the horrors our country has experienced in the process of building it. When we remove information on the harmful effects of human-caused climate change and how it is inevitably affecting our national parks, we are choosing to remain ignorant to our rapidly deteriorating environment and planet.

Living in a time where nearly everything can be accessed at our fingertips, it is important not to let the government dictate what we can and cannot know about our country and our planet.

While the news is primarily focused on the continuous release of the Epstein files, the conflict in Palestine and the growing fear of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, it is important to not let news fatigue prevent us from knowing when information is being taken away.

- Sav Chavez,
features editor

Like it? Hate it? Let us know.
Email us your opinions at
elle.daniel@umontana.edu

Slacking off



Ian Klise balances while slacklining on the Oval on Feb. 22. WILL LADYMAN | MONTANA KAIMIN

In local news...

JACK SNOW | NEWS EDITOR
jack.snow@umontana.edu

RESERVE STREET SAFETY PLAN FINALIZED

A coalition of transportation planners recently finalized a plan to improve the safety of Missoula's Reserve Street.

The street had over 1,600 crashes between 2019 and 2023, with 63 of those crashes resulting in serious injuries and three resulting in death, according to KPAX.

The Reserve Street Safety Action Plan looks to address the roadway's issues by implementing three major solutions: intersection control, access management and increasing safety for cyclists and pedestrians.

"A lot of these interventions would involve ease of turning movements onto and off of the corridor [and] include improved crossing for bicyclists and pedestrians. So the corridor feels less like a barrier to utilize for all modes," said Charles Menefee, a senior planner at the Missoula Metropolitan Planning Organization.

In practice, these changes might result in enhanced crosswalks, new roundabouts and extra roadside signage. The plan also includes future ideas for Reserve Street, like separated bike lanes and larger sidewalks.

The plan now has a finalized draft, but the public is still able to comment through Engage Missoula.

MONTANA BUSINESS EXPERTS WEIGH IN ON TARIFFS

After the U.S. Supreme Court ruled many of President Donald Trump's tariffs unconstitutional on Friday, Montana business leaders gave their opinions on the impacts of that decision.

Brigitta Miranda-Freer, the director of the University of Montana-affiliated

Montana World Trade Center, said that the ruling will cut down on "economy-wide" tariffs in favor of narrower, more targeted trade policies.

"I think that's good news for businesses that are trying to navigate this on a daily basis," Miranda-Freer said.

In contrast, Montana Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Todd O'Hair said he's worried about reactions from the White House and legal trouble over tariff refunds, according to Montana Free Press.

"The president is committed to some sort of a tariff policy. It's unclear what he pivots to next," O'Hair said. "There's just going to continue to be uncertainty."

President Trump said on Friday that he will be imposing a 10% "global tariff" using a different approach.

MISSING MISSOULA MAN FOUND DEAD AFTER SUSPECTED CLIMBING ACCIDENT

Ravalli County deputies found a 30-year-old Missoula man dead at the bottom of a rock face south of Hamilton on Feb. 17.

The Ravalli County Sheriff's Office reported the death along with a statement from Coroner Steve Holton, who said that the deceased Richard McGowan likely died after falling in a rock climbing accident, according to Nonstop Local News.

McGowan was reported missing on Feb. 15. After discovering his vehicle on Feb. 17, authorities searched the area with assistance from drones and a National Guard helicopter.

Officers found McGowan in the Sleeping Child drainage.

"Sheriff Holton also extended the Ravalli County Sheriff's Office's sincere condolences to Mr. McGowan's family and friends," the sheriff's office wrote.



This week on the Kaimin Cast ...

As part of a fundraiser for the University of Montana's National Association for Music Education chapter, Singing Valentines were delivered by a small pep band around campus.

The band entered classrooms and sang "Hey Baby" as they delivered a note from the messenger. The valentines could be bought and delivered for friends, partners and staff on the Friday before Valentine's Day. They brought joy, embarrassment and fun breaks to the day as classmates sang along and phones were brought out to record the deliveries for the special recipient.

"It's a really cool thing to give the rest of the class a break, too, and have some fun. It's mid-February and it's typically gross out. And I think the thought process was just like, let's do something fun during this time that's not really that fun," senior Cameron Doucette said.

To listen to the performances of "Hey Baby" and learn more about the fundraiser, check out the latest Kaimin Cast, "40 performances of love," by heading to our website at montanakaimin.com.

- Grace Golbach,
audio editor



New Kaimin Cast episode out this week. Stay tuned. Scan for the latest



FORMER BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO US ARRESTED AFTER EPSTEIN DEVELOPMENTS

British police arrested Peter Mandelson, former British ambassador to the U.S., after allegations that he provided confidential government information to Jeffrey Epstein.

London's Metropolitan Police issued a statement saying, "Officers have arrested a 72-year-old man on suspicion of misconduct in public office."

The statement also specified that the man had been taken to a London police station to be formally interviewed, according to the New York Times.

The police did not name Mandelson, but BBC footage showed him being led from his home to a police car by officers.

Additional scrutiny of Mandelson's relationship with Epstein surfaced after the U.S. Department of Justice released new documents related to the late sex offender.

The latest batch of these documents indicated that Mandelson may have given Epstein confidential market information in 2009.

Mandelson has not officially been charged with a crime as of Monday.

HOUSE SPEAKER TELLS TEXAS REPRESENTATIVE TO ADDRESS AFFAIR SCANDAL

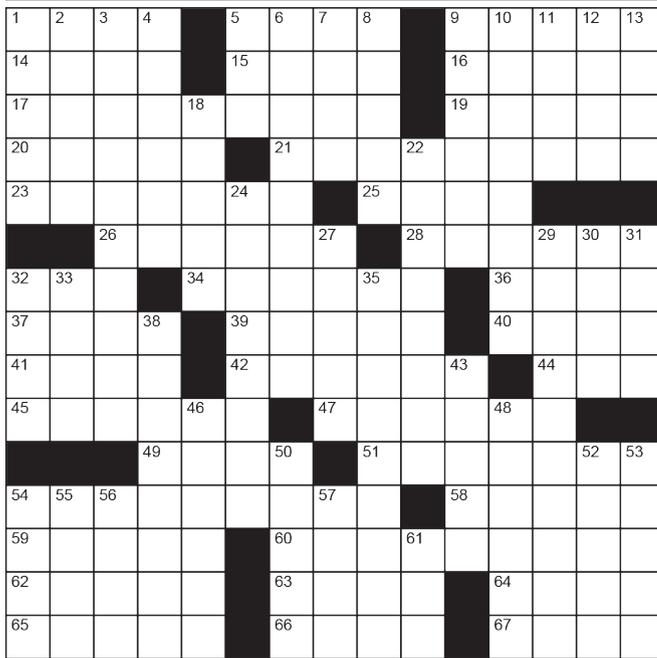
House Speaker Mike Johnson said Monday that he has talked with Rep. Tony Gonzales about affair allegations leveled against him and asked the Texas Republican to promptly address the accusations.

Gonzales is alleged to have had an affair with a staffer who died by suicide last year, but has denied the claims and said that he's being blackmailed, according to CNN.

Johnson had previously endorsed Gonzales for reelection in the upcoming Texas primary.

"I endorsed Tony before all these allegations came out. They're obviously very serious, and I've spoken with him and told him he's got to address that in an appropriate way with his constituents and all of that," Johnson said on Monday.

Bobby Barrera, an attorney representing Adrian Aviles, said that his client's spouse, Gonzales' district staffer Regina Ann Santos-Aviles, confessed that she had been having an affair with Gonzales in 2024.



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ACROSS

- 1 Matches, as a wager
- 5 Gambling, e.g.
- 9 Lacquer ingredient
- 14 Teen's torment
- 15 Ticks off
- 16 Preface
- 17 Gives a heads-up
- 19 Kind of number
- 20 Upper crust
- 21 Timeless
- 23 Burton or Gere
- 25 Void's companion
- 26 Medal-worthy
- 28 Experience again
- 32 "Grand" hotel in Vegas
- 34 Rode the wind
- 36 Novelist Bagnold
- 37 Greek god of war
- 39 No longer fresh
- 40 Genesis setting
- 41 Bluish-white metal
- 42 Choir section
- 44 "Surfin' ___" (1963 hit)
- 45 Lure
- 47 Cleansing remedies
- 49 Clay-rich soil
- 51 Warts and such
- 54 Florida, mostly
- 58 ___ ' to go (eager)
- 59 Justice since 2006
- 60 Renee's "Chicago" co-star
- 62 Nashville NFLer
- 63 It may be bright
- 64 Miami's county
- 65 Prophets
- 66 Puts two and two together?
- 67 Disparaging remark
- 22 The 'who' in a whodunit
- 24 Barnyard rousers
- 27 Construction site sight
- 29 ___ Revolution
- 30 Goes head-to-head
- 31 ___ St. Vincent Millay
- 32 Pac-Man feature
- 33 Pleased look
- 35 Stretched out
- 38 Curved sword
- 43 Campfire treat
- 46 Church doctrines
- 48 Oscar and Tony
- 50 Caribbean island: Saint ___
- 52 Like Gandhi
- 53 Nasty look
- 54 Butter bits
- 55 Nobelist Wiesel
- 56 Evening, informally
- 57 Alan or Diane
- 61 ___-been

DOWN

- 1 Less risky
- 2 Dangerous bacteria
- 3 Fertilizer's purpose
- 4 Fume
- 5 By way of
- 6 Light up
- 7 Word on a penny
- 8 German steel city
- 9 Tiny wave
- 10 Course taker
- 11 Culinary directive
- 12 "___ la Douce" (1963 film)
- 13 Playwright Coward
- 18 Becomes frayed

Answers to Previous Crossword:

T	E	M	P	O	P	T	S	A	G	I	L	E
H	A	I	L	R	U	S	E	N	A	D	I	A
U	S	G	A	W	E	A	R	G	L	E	N	S
S	T	R	I	D	E	R	E	L	E	V	A	T
A	D	U	L	T	N	I	L	E				
S	A	T	C	L	O	S	E	F	I	S	T	E
C	L	I	N	T	E	L	E	C	T	I	V	E
A	L	O	E	S	A	T	Y	R	O	D	O	R
L	I	N	G	U	I	N	I	S	N	A	K	E
A	S	A	S	S	I	N	A	T	E	L	E	K
T	E	A	M	M	A	C	A	W				
C	A	M	I	L	L	A	O	U	T	L	A	S
O	L	I	V	E	T	A	R	T	O	V	I	S
M	A	L	E	S	O	P	A	L	H	E	C	K
P	R	E	S	S	R	E	L	Y	A	S	K	S

Trope-o-scope

KAIRI LISING | ARTS & CULTURE EDITOR
kairi.lising@umontana.edu

February is for the lovers and the dreamers — or maybe I should say fantasizers? While cuffing season was successful for some, it's safe to say the love bug hasn't caught all of us. Outside, birds of a feather are flocking together. But you? You've found your mom's classic romance paperback collection, the ones with a shirtless ripped guy and a woman clinging to him. The tried-and-true bodice rippers of old beg the question: What classic romance trope is your life?

PISCES (FEB. 19-MARCH 20):

This is the kind of greed they talk about in the Bible. Your romance trope is the drama-filled love triangle. Not only do you have one person interested in you, which is hard enough these days, but two? Save some for the rest of us and pick one!

ARIES (MARCH 21-APRIL 19):

Aries, you're dreaming of a hot and passionate romance, and what else could that be but enemies-to-lovers? You've been at odds with your academic rival for years now, but I foresee a magical night that changes everything.

TAURUS (APRIL 20-MAY 20):

Call that a marriage of convenience! Your love life's trope is a fun one: the fake relationship! Whether it's to make an ex jealous or to avoid the "still single?" question at Thanksgiving, your mutually beneficial relationship might have more bones than you think.

GEMINI (MAY 21-JUNE 20): It couldn't possibly work out, right? We're totally different people! Your life is the magnetic opposites attract trope. Remember that one person in your science gen-ed who is the complete polar opposite of you? That's the love of your life, dude. Jump on that.

CANCER (JUNE 21-JULY 22): Forget everything you know about your love life. It won't take long, I'm sure. Your romance trope is a classic one: amnesia! Your forgotten lover is still here for you, though, in sickness and in health.

LEO (JULY 23-AUG. 22): Oh nooooo! Seven minutes in heaven with your crush? You couldn't possibly do that (you've dreamed of this moment). Your love life is the forced proximity trope. We all know there's nothing that gets the trumpets of love singing like you, me and shared oxygen.

VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEP. 22): At the end of the day, we all just want to be cared for, right? It's looking like your love life is playing into the maybe problematic age gap trope. Power imbalances aside, a hot silver fox is in your area and they've got social security money to spend!

LIBRA (SEP. 23-OCT. 22):

Unlike the rest of us, you still believe love is real. And for you? It just might be true. Your romance trope is the one we all wish we had: soulmates. Be patient, dear Libra, your fated lover will stumble into your life soon enough.

SCORPIO (OCT. 23-NOV. 21):

No, we can't! What will people say! Your romance trope is the ever-tumultuous forbidden love. You're in love with a Montana State student. You and your star-crossed Bobcat might be endgame, but everyone is trying to tear you apart. Fret not, love conquers all.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21):

Maybe love is real. They say true love is friendship. Your life is playing into the friends-to-lovers trope this year, Sag! Suddenly, you see your best friend in an entirely different light. A horny light? Go for it!

CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 19):

You'll have to wait for the end of this year for your romance trope to be set in motion, Capricorn. Like a classic Hallmark movie, you're destined to fall in love during the holiday season. Lucky you! Start stocking up on mistletoe now, I heard it's on sale at Costco.

AQUARIUS (JAN. 20-FEB. 18): A snowed-in cabin, only one bed, and a broken-down station wagon. Your life is the crowd-pleasing stuck-together trope. Oh my gosh, it's soooo cold over here, want to warm me up? There's a pickup line, on the house.



BARRETT CLEMENT | MONTANA KAIMIN

University of Montana announces progress in presidential search

AIDAN GRAHAM | NEWS REPORTER
aidan.graham@umontana.edu

Over a month has passed since the resignation of former University of Montana President Seth Bodnar kickstarted the University's search for his replacement.

While neither a candidate or interim president has been named, the University has made significant headway in expediting the presidential search.

Forced into an unprecedented time frame, University leadership, working alongside the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, have shown optimism for both the search and the University's ability to properly run in the meantime.

"The timeline is going to depend on how the candidate pool develops, so we will have to wait and see," said Galen Hollenbaugh, deputy commissioner at the Office of Higher Education. "I think we're all pretty excited about the applications that are coming in, so we believe the pool will be vibrant enough."

Commissioner of Higher Education at the Montana University System, Clayton Christian, announced the search in the "Under the M" newsletter on Jan. 28, coinciding with the launch of the presidential search portion of the UM website. The website provides an open application for the presidential role, as well as an opportunity for nominations.

The Office of Higher Education has stated it is also working in collaboration with AGB Search, an organization specializing in searching for potential executive officers in the United States University system.

According to the commissioner's office, AGB Search and the commissioner are holding in-person meetings with the University Leadership Council, Staff Senate Executive Committee and Associated Students of the University of Montana student leadership.

"These conversations have provided valuable insight into the leadership priorities and expectations of the UM community," Christian stated in an email to University staff.

According to the UM website, a qualified candidate must have experience in an executive leadership role in an educational setting, be able to transparently run an administration fostering academia and must be someone who understands the culture and spirit

of not only the state of Montana, but the University as a whole.

"The next president will build on this momentum, guide the University through continued change in higher education, and ensure UM remains accessible,

excellent and deeply connected to the people and communities it serves," Christian said in an "Under the M" newsletter on Feb. 19.

Applications have already begun to flow in from coast to coast, according to

Hollenbaugh.

"Just because we've begun review doesn't mean we're not still accepting applicants," Hollenbaugh said. "AGB is out recruiting and following up on nominations, but there aren't any candidates at this time as we have not fully vetted them. For now, as we move forward, there are no leading contenders."

While the search is active, the University of Montana has continued to act without presidential leadership. The UM administration, alongside the Office of Higher Education, has claimed all decisions requiring presidential input will be made according to already established protocol, while unprecedented issues will be discussed among higher leadership.

Major decisions, however, such as program funding, that have been in progress for multiple years will pass without presidential input. At this time the University will not be appointing an interim president.

"We're letting it run the way it is because of the fantastic leadership we have," Hollenbaugh said. "It's great to have the University in the state it is because it really assists in the leadership process."

The UM Administration said the lack of presidential leadership has not impacted student life at this time and that programs and administrative work continue forward smoothly.

The commissioner's office, alongside the University, has said it plans to remain transparent throughout this ongoing process. Additionally, students are given the opportunity to give input into candidate qualities on the UM website, and will be as much a part of the process as the administration.

"There will be a day and time where a candidate, possibly multiple, will come to campus and do something like a public party interview where students and faculty will get to meet candidates, listen to speakers and ask questions," UM Spokesperson Dave Kuntz said. "It won't be like, one day we all show up and there's a new president. As the process goes forward, involving input from the community is going to be a huge part of it."

Continued updates to the presidential search posted by Commissioner Christian can be found in the "Under the M" newsletter, and will be posted every Thursday to the UM website until the search is complete.



BARRETT CLEMENT | MONTANA KAIMIN

Post Malone concert ticket prices cause mixed feelings

COLBY SUKO-CLARK | NEWS REPORTER

colby.suko-clark@umontana.edu

While many Missoulians have expressed excitement for Post Malone's Big Ass Stadium Tour concert at Washington-Grizzly Stadium in July, some have said ticket prices are too high to attend.

Malone announced his upcoming performance at the University of Montana on July 21, for the second part of his latest concert series, the Big Ass Stadium Tour. Jelly Roll and Carter Faith will join him for the concert. Malone is a Grammy-winning artist known for his earlier rap music, including "Sunflower" and "Circles," but he recently made the transition to country music with the release of his latest album, "F-1 Trillion."

"I love Post Malone and his music. Ever since I first heard 'Sunflower' I have been listening to all of his releases," said Justin Miller, a junior at Montana State University.

Miller said he never thought Malone would come to this state. "I was shocked when I heard the announcement. He is a top-level artist, and I never would have dreamed he would come to Montana," Miller said. Many UM students are excited to see the concert, but the prices have raised some opposition.

"The prices are insane. I love Post Malone, don't get me wrong, but I ain't paying \$400 to have to squint to see him," said Courtney Manthey, a graduate student at the University of Montana who has attended previous Malone concerts.

The concert will have multiple types of seating which vary in price. Regular seats range from \$231.50 on the far side of the stadium to \$346.50 for seating closer to the stage.

The other packages are deluxe seating, which ranges from \$421 to \$921. The most expensive package is the Ultimate Front Row VIP Experience package, which includes drink services,

exclusive gifts and other benefits, but costs \$1,496. While some are upset by the prices, others say this is just a normal part of attending concerts.

"The prices have come to be what I expect from going to a concert these days," said Cole Christiansen, a recent graduate from the University of Montana. Christiansen has attended multiple concerts at UM and notes that ticket prices are often high. "I remember the Waka Flocka Flame Haunted Festival prices and thinking, 'Who would pay that?' but that just seems to be the world we are living in right now," Christiansen said.

The Waka Flocka Flame concert had three ticket packages: general admission was \$250, VIP tickets cost \$350 and the Super VIP pack was \$1,500. However, some students thought Malone's concert would be cheaper after Macklemore came to the University.

"Macklemore's general admission tickets were \$50 to \$100, so I thought maybe we were actually going to see changes in prices, but I guess that was just an outlier," Christiansen said. Macklemore came to the University in October of 2023, and also had VIP packages that started at \$250.

Regardless, people are excited about the business that is generated from concerts.

"Every time a concert comes, business increases by a lot of people that buy souvenirs or other merchandise," said Jason Baxter, a retail worker in Missoula.

The Bureau of Business and Economic Research reported that concerts with a full stadium like the University of Montana can generate around \$5 million for the local economy.

Beyond the economical impact, others said they are excited about the other guest that is a part of the concert.

"I am so pumped to get to see Jelly Roll and Post Malone, it is a bucket list concert and I can't wait to see them

live," said Jeremiah Scheid, a graduate of Montana State University who purchased the most expensive package. "I love 'Son of a Sinner' and it really resonated with me ever since I first heard that song, so I am beyond excited to be able to see Jelly Roll on stage." Jelly Roll has also won Grammys for his music. The third artist along for the tour is Carter Faith.

Faith's debut album "Cherry Valley" was released in October of last year. While she is a newer name to the music scene, she does have fans in the Missoula area. "Her voice is amazing and I am excited to see how she grows

in the country music community," said Kate Sullivan, a former MSU student. "Her music is so powerful, and she is an amazing addition to the concert."

The concert series will start in Texas on May 13, and will tour the country until finally ending in Canada on July 25. The tour will have 17 concerts in total spanning the three months. The tickets for the UM concert are available for purchase on the Ticketmaster website. Yet, the prices are still a major concern of this series. "I want to be able to afford concerts, not make them all have to be a bucket list price," Taylor said.

1 Ticket	Filters
	<p>Sec FLOOR 2 • Row 19</p> <p>\$828.79</p> <p>Resale Ticket</p> <p>Mobile Entry</p>
	<p>Sec FLOOR 1 • Row 19</p> <p>\$828.79</p> <p>Resale Ticket</p> <p>Mobile Entry</p>
	<p>Sec FLOOR 6 • Row 18</p> <p>\$1,060.13</p> <p>Resale Ticket</p> <p>Mobile Entry</p>

A screenshot from Ticketmaster's website shows Post Malone concert ticket prices on Feb. 23.

CONTRIBUTED | TICKETMASTER

FLIPPING THE U.M. F



New UM football head coach Bobby Kennedy stands in his new office at the Adams Center on Feb. 13. JACKSON MAILEY | MONTANA KAIMIN

On game days at Washington-Grizzly Stadium, former head coach Bobby Hauck could be spotted on the sidelines in a sea of maroon, sporting a headset and a grim expression. But now Griz fans will find a different man calling plays at the University of Montana.

On Feb. 4, Hauck announced his retirement as head coach. Hauck ended his 14-year career at UM, coaching first from 2003-2009 and again from 2018-2026.

However, the pressure of the spotlight wasn't the reason Hauck decided to step away from the coaching position.

Instead, it was the developments around the game itself.

The transfer portal was one of the reasons that Hauck cited for his departure in a press conference. The portal allows players to switch teams and divisions freely. Hauck also brought up the Name, Image and Likeness deals, which allows student-athletes to get paid in return for brand endorsements.

Hauck said in his retirement press conference that football was no longer fun.

"Dealing with what college football has become is not always enjoyable as a head coach," Hauck said. "I just haven't been enjoying it enough. I want to enjoy my career and my job. A lot of the head

coach stuff in current-day Division I college football is not enjoyable."

The usage and potential abuse of the portal and NIL has caused a large controversy within all collegiate athletics. Some smaller schools have been hit hard with changes and payments.

"The portal is probably the single biggest problem that needs to be solved," Tennessee Attorney General Jonathan Skrmetti said to USA Today. "The portal is just sucking the life out of college sports and putting student-athletes in a bad position. And if there is one change in the immediate future that needs to happen, it's fixing the portal."

In January, Duke University sued its own quarterback to try to stop him from leaving the school, stating that he violated his NIL contract that ran until December.

As NIL deals become more popular for college athletes, the number of players seen in the portal rises.

"Dealing with agents and the transient nature of this and the lack of forward thinking by young people — which it's never been a strong suit for centuries for young people, but now when they've got adults pushing them and pulling them in different directions — I kind of got tired of all that," Hauck said.

After his departure, Hauck got a call from Bret Bielema, the University of

THROUGH PLAYBOOK

After leading the Griz for 14 years, Bobby Hauck's retirement as head coach launched the University of Montana into a new era of football.

**STORY BY
HANNAH
BENITEZ
PHOTOS BY
MONTANA
KAIMIN**



Then-UM head football coach Bobby Hauck listens as panelists discuss the criminal behavior by football players who were on his team at the time on Feb. 26, 2018. **TATE SAMATA | MONTANA KAIMIN ARCHIVE**

Illinois head coach, asking him to take the position of defensive coordinator.

"This is the only guy I offered the job to. This is the only guy that I talked to. He's the only guy that I gave the opportunity to," Bielema said.

So Hauck jumped on a plane and flew to Illinois on Feb. 9, according to the athletic department at the University of Illinois.

"It was kind of time for me to do something besides being the head coach. I didn't know what that was exactly. I really wanted to get back to my roots, which is being on the defensive side of football," Hauck said to the Bozeman Chronicle. "I wasn't sure what that meant. But I did know it was

time for me to not be the head coach anymore just because I wanted to get back to coaching defense."

After Hauck's departure, the Griz needed to find a leader to continue the Grizzlies' success before the start of spring training in April.

UM went with Bobby Kennedy, the Grizzlies' wide receiver coach for the 2025 season, but is known in the Division I head coaching world for bringing success.

Now, in the wake of his departure, the Kaimin looks back on Hauck's years leading Griz football.

THE FIRST SIX YARDS

Hauck competed in track and field at UM and graduated in 1988. He returned to the Grizzlies in December 2002 to take on the football head coaching position. Before returning to UM, he spent four years at the University of Washington as a special teams coordinator and defensive teams coach, despite not playing football in college.

According to previous coaches from the Huskies, Hauck was considered one of the top recruiters in college football.

Because of this, UM Athletics knew he was right for the job despite never having any experience as a head coach.

While the first season under Hauck's coaching wasn't eye-catching for fans after ending the season with a score of 9-4, the Griz bounced back to winning in the following seasons.

Hauck then brought the Griz to the national stage. With 59 wins and only 17 losses in his first six years, the Griz were able to make appearances in division championship games, both in the D1-AA in 2004 and the Football Championship Subdivision in 2008.

But the head coaching job wasn't always about playing football on the field. Hauck had to weigh in on the player's off-campus actions.

When he took the position, UM Athletics found itself in a rigid moment. After coach Joe Glenn, who led the Griz from 2000-2002 and assisted in leading the team to its 2001 national championship, left to join the University of Wyoming, the Griz needed a new coach to manage the players both on and off the field.

After being brought on as head coach in 2003, Hauck told UM Athletics he wanted more accountability to his players as students.

"Guys make their decisions. You're dealing with 100-plus college students, and they're going to come to a point in time when they act one way or another, and they know that there's going to be accountability for their actions," Hauck said.

Hauck hoped to change the direction that Griz football was heading. However, by the end of his first season as head coach, Hauck found himself dealing with controversial issues.

In 2010, Beau Donaldson, a running back recruited by Hauck, sexually assaulted his childhood friend after a party. Donaldson pled guilty in 2013 and was sentenced to a 30-year prison sentence with 20 years suspended.

But Donaldson wasn't just an outlier. Multiple Grizzlies were later charged with various crimes.

Three players, running back Greg Coleman and defensive backs Mike Shelton and Jeremy Pate, were arrested in 2007 for a drug-related robbery.

In June 2007, cornerback Jimmy Wilson turned himself in to California authorities who were investigating the shooting death of Wilson's aunt's boyfriend. Wilson was later acquitted of the charge.

Later that year, in September, cornerback Timothy L. Parks was arrested on allegations of pointing a gun at a woman's head in order to get the woman to pay a debt.

In response to the charges, Hauck said in a press conference, "There were times where we also brought some young men on this team who conducted themselves in a manner that wasn't worthy of

wearing the Grizzly uniform or that helmet. I'm ready to do a better job on that score as well. Nothing's perfect. College kids aren't perfect. They won't be."

In Hauck's last season as head coach in 2009, the team went undefeated in the regular season, only losing to Villanova University in Chattanooga, Tennessee in the FCS National Championship game.

Hauck then moved to the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, which plays in the Mountain West Conference, where he coached from 2010-2014.

But in 2015, he took a slower-paced job at San Diego State University as an associate head coach.

Yet, Hauck expressed in a press conference that he felt that his time at Montana wasn't done.

ENTERING THE REDZONE

After being away from Montana for eight years, Hauck returned to Washington-Grizzly Stadium.

From his comeback in 2018 to his departure announcement this year,

Griz fans saw the football team achieve multiple highlight reel moments.

The one that gained the Griz national attention was its win over Hauck's former team in 2021, the University of Washington Huskies, who were in the PAC-12 Conference in the Football Bowl Subdivision, a step up from the Big Sky Conference.

"That is undoubtedly one of the biggest wins in Grizzly history, just for what it was. A win over a top 25 FBS program," Eric Taber, UM's director of communications for football, said. "I went and took a photo of him and Shann Schillinger, who was one of our coaches at the time, at midfield with the scoreboard in the background, just because he wanted to savor the moment. Those wins don't come around very often."

Another big moment for the Griz and Hauck was the double overtime win against North Dakota State that sent the Griz to the FCS National Championship game in 2023, something that the Griz had not been to since Hauck's last season in 2009.

"It was a monumental win in program history," Hauck said to UM Athletics. "It's one of the biggest games in stadium history, if not the biggest. It's hard to quantify, but it's certainly one of the top five games in stadium history and just an all-time great game."

But it wasn't just the on-field action that Hauck tried to take to the next level when he made his return to the maroon and silver. He wanted to develop players in the classroom and give Montana-born athletes a place to show off the talent that could come out of the state.

Growing up in Big Timber, Hauck saw the talent that could come out of the state.

For the 2026 season, the Griz enrolled 36 players from the state of Montana, hailing from big towns like Missoula and Bozeman and smaller towns like Red Lodge and Anaconda.

"He knew that Grizzly football can succeed and can excel with Montana-born and raised football players," Taber said. "You can't fill an entire team with them, but he knew that if you're filling the roster with as many Montana kids as possible, that's generally going to work out in your favor."

The drive to enroll Montana-born players is what gave Jordan Tripp the opportunity to represent his state at the University of Montana from 2009-2013.

"I grew up here, watching the Griz, so when I got recruited by Hauck, I knew I needed to come," Tripp said.



Bobby Hauck speaks to reporters at the Press Box sports bar on Nov. 24, 2019, during his time as head football coach.

JACK MARSHALL | MONTANA KAIMIN ARCHIVE

UM TIMELINE

1988

HAUCK GRADUATES FROM UM

2003

HAUCK APPOINTED UM HEAD COACH

2004

DT-AA CHAMPIONSHIP
GAME APPEARANCE

2007

SEVEN PLAYERS ARRESTED
FOR VARIOUS CRIMES

2008

FCS CHAMPIONSHIP
GAME APPEARANCE

2009

HAUCK STEPS DOWN
AS UM HEAD COACH

2010

BEAU DONALDSON ARRESTED
FOR ASSAULT

2013

DONALDSON PLED GUILTY

2018

HAUCK'S FIRST SEASON
BACK AS HEAD COACH

2021

BEATS UNIVERSITY
OF WASHINGTON HUSKIES

2023

FCS CHAMPIONSHIP
GAME APPEARANCE

2026

RETIRED AS HEAD COACH

Tripp went on to play for the Green Bay Packers in the National Football League for six years, another part of his career that Tripp attributed to his time with Hauck.

"While I only worked with him for my freshman year, he still taught me how to be a great football player and what it meant to represent the University of Montana," Tripp said.

But it wasn't just the on-field moments that felt Hauck's presence.

After Hauck graduated from UM, he decided to get his master's degree in educational administration at the University of California, Los Angeles. When he came back to UM, Hauck went on to help players maintain a 3.0 or higher grade point average.

"He knew that the student athlete experience creates better people for our world and society," Taber said. "Part of his vision for developing student athletes is just making sure they're getting good grades in the classroom."

Hauck's encouragement for UM athletes wasn't solely reserved for the football team, though. He made appearances at multiple sports events on campus.

UM volleyball player Madeline Sanderson said, "I was surprised. Every time that I see him, he always is super kind to us on the volleyball team, asks how we're doing and super supportive of us."

But as the team enters a new era, it turns to Bobby Kennedy, former wide receiver coach, who joined the Griz for the 2025 season to bring the team to victory and patch its relationship with locals.

PUT ME IN, COACH

Bobby Kennedy, a coach with 30 years of experience in college football, has been named UM's 38th head coach.

While Kennedy doesn't have head coaching experience at the University of Montana, Mack Brown, a former head coach of the University of Texas Longhorns from 1998-2003, knew he was right for the job. Kennedy took over coaching the Longhorns after Brown left.

"Coach Kennedy has a unique ability to communicate with people and connect with players," Brown told UM Athletics in a recent article. "I think the University of Montana, the players he will be coaching and the coaches around him are really lucky to have him, and they are going to enjoy him."

From helping lead the Longhorns to a national title in 2005, coaching in multiple Rose Bowls and producing several NFL wide receiver draft picks, Kennedy hopes to continue Hauck's legacy as the head coach of the Grizzlies.

"My pledge to you, to every player in this room that's a player at the University of Montana, is that I'm going to know you personally. I'm going to invest in this team and I'm going to



Then head coach Bobby Hauck points to his friends and family in the crowd at the beginning of a press conference on Dec. 1, 2017, after announcing his new role.

SARA DIGGINS | MONTANA KAIMIN ARCHIVE

invest in you, and we're going to move this thing forward," Kennedy said at his introductory press conference.

Kennedy knew coming into the role that it was going to be hard to live up to the legacy of UM and Hauck.

"You can't replace Bobby Hauck. Not only is he a great head coach, also the best special teams coach in America," Kennedy said.

Kennedy got the call from Hauck about the opening of a wide receiver coaching position just three days before training camp started. After consulting his wife, Kennedy knew he had to jump on the opportunity.

During a press conference in February, Kennedy said he had a high amount of praise for Hauck, but also for his family, calling them welcoming and helpful in his journey to the Big Sky state.

"I've been their roommates for the past eight months. I've been living in their basement, and I don't know many wives who would do that," Kennedy said.

Kennedy reflected Hauck's desire to make sure players are living to their full potential, not just on the field, but in the classroom as well. He also noted a yearning for a championship title for the Griz.

"We want to win the Big Sky Championship and the national championship," Kennedy said. "When I'm in this position, it's my goal and my purpose. But know this, this is going to be my last job, whether it's long, let's make it long. I want this to be my

last job. Thank you, Bobby [Hauck], for retiring."

Even though Griz fans have to wait until August to see the outcome of Kennedy's coaching, fans can enjoy the playful nature and calmness of the new coach.

As the University enters a new era of football, it takes time to reflect on the journey under Coach Hauck.

"Getting the chance to work under him gave me a better understanding of why the Grizzlies have been so successful over the years," Taber said. "It takes people like Coach Hauck and their passions for the place to keep their programs winning consistently like Montana has. He put his heart and soul in this place, and I think he'll be remembered for it for a long time."

While Kennedy has some high moments to live up to, many players and coaches are rallying behind him to bring it home for the Griz.

Glenn said, "I am thrilled to hear about Bobby Kennedy's appointment as the head football coach for the Grizzlies. I first met him in Northern Colorado in 1989. Since then, he has become one of the most respected and successful college football coaches in the nation. His expertise in the game has always been outstanding, but what truly distinguishes him is his exceptional ability to connect with those around him."

Griz fans can hope to see Bobby Kennedy on the field celebrating moments like a win in the Brawl of the Wild or a national championship this season.

Big Sky Doc Fest: What's the doc best?

This year marks the 23rd annual Big Sky Documentary Film Festival, Missoula's premier event for cinephiles,

academics and casual viewers. The festival brings a smorgasbord of documentary topics. From male birth

control to tumultuous family drama, here are several films highlighted by the Kaimin arts staff.

- *Kairi Lising, arts editor*



A still from "And If the Body." CONTRIBUTED | BIG SKY DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL

'AND IF THE BODY' DIRECTED AND PRODUCED BY TOBY LEE

Symmetrical shots. The sounds of machines whirring and ticking. People, patients, with neutral expressions. The faint flicker of graininess across the screen.

It's not a Wes Anderson movie. It's a documentary about neurotechnology by director and producer Toby Lee. "And If the Body" follows patients on their journey back to mobility after losing control of their bodies, as each individual works to get back the life that they once had.

Without spoon-feeding the information to viewers, Lee shows the ins and outs of treating the brain and spinal cord. A doctor explains the electrodes providing stimulus to the spinal cord at one point, and each patient quietly divulges their medical dilemma. But most of the film is spent immersed in their world: the sound of a treadmill inching forward, a room

full of machines clicking away.

But that's just one part of the puzzle. Lee puts the viewer in the position of the patient entirely. The documentary begins from the point of view of a woman in her virtual reality world. She walks around her campsite, watching geese waddle about as the sun rises above the floating rock on the horizon. Later, we see an older woman biking away, encouraged by her medical team. She sees herself flying above the trees on a pegasus — and the audience can see it too.

Emotional impact is prioritized above medical jargon here. The combination of the music, first-hand quotes from patients and near-silence project the viewer on the same path as those going through treatment. Watch for a vintage approach to modern medicine.

- *Bee Reiswig, arts reporter*

'NI-NAADAMAADIZ: RED POWER RISING' DIRECTED BY SHANE BELCOURT

"Ni-Naadamaadiz: Red Power Rising" captures a moment in Canadian history marked by the Land Back movement led by the Ojibwe Warrior Society, a group of young people fighting for the rights of Indigenous people in Canada.

The film primarily covers the occupation of Anicinabe Park in 1974, where armed warriors occupied the park for 38 days to protest the systemic issues Native people were facing. The White Dog and Grassy Narrows Reservations' waters had been poisoned with mercury, destroying their lands and leaving Indigenous people unable to fish or use their own water.

The film focuses heavily on leader Louis Cameron, who survived a residential school where he was brutally abused. His voice is heard through his son reading his unpublished writing, through a narration in Ojibwe, a powerful moment when the viewer gets deep insight into the grief that a son feels for his father. Cameron tragically passed away after sustaining head injuries from

falling down a flight of stairs. Many people who surrounded him believed his death was one of many acts of violence that didn't get justice.

Systemic violence also plagued Indigenous people in the area, where assault and deadly violence without consequence were extremely common. The film doesn't pull punches, expressing how commonplace it was for Indigenous people to be beaten and killed. During the occupation, the Warriors demanded that the Canadian government return stolen Anishinaabe land in Treaty 3 territory. Treaty 3 determined land ownership and hunting licensing by the Ojibwe people in 1873.

The film uses archival footage from the 1970s, which at times creates an atmospheric sense of being. At other times, it evokes a feeling of great intensity as viewers witness the violence inflicted on the protesters.

The film reads as a foundation for an ongoing fight for Indigenous rights in North America.

- *Blue Rogalski, arts reporter*



A still from "Ni-Naadamaadiz: Red Power Rising." CONTRIBUTED | BIG SKY DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL



A still from "Animal Eye." CONTRIBUTED | BIG SKY DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL

'ANIMAL EYE' DIRECTED AND PRODUCED BY CARLO NASISSE

A long held debate: Does everyone see the same colors? Or are there just common names for them based on societal context?

As it turns out, it's almost impossible to tell.

As Carlo Nasisse's "Animal Eye" explains, French philosopher Rene Descartes conducted an experiment in which he used a dissected ox eye lens to look at the moon. He had observed that there's distortion in size: The moon looks larger at the horizon and smaller in the sky. As he looked through the ox's lens, Descartes didn't see any changes.

The "moon illusion" originates in the mind. Despite the fact that one can imagine what it may look like to literally

see from another species' point of view, there's not a way to fully understand this — it's in the brain. "Animal Eye" does its best, however. It's a fascinating experience that really makes one think about their day-to-day vision.

Fish-eye camera angles, unique color grading and a vivid Spanish description of how a spider might view the world allow viewers to get into the headspace of different creatures. The imagination contorts and expands. Dive into the animal mind and explore what the world might look like from eyes other than one's own. Definitely worth a watch.

- Bee Reiswig, arts reporter

'GIVE IT A SHOT' DIRECTED AND PRODUCED BY VAISHALI SINHA

Male birth control as a film topic is not something that I expected to attend, but I was pleasantly surprised by the information and history "Give It a Shot" showed about struggles of contraception. There was a strong presence of women throughout it sharing their experiences surrounding the burden of birth control, and insights on the progress of male birth control.

The film emphasized the responsibility that women carry to use birth control. Birth control pills have a multitude of side effects, including acne, weight fluctuation and even strokes. Other options like the intrauterine device are painful to have inserted and a larger commitment.

This documentary highlights that when most people are asked about male birth control, they say condoms or a vasectomy. Both have their pros and cons and exist in drastically different forms. Condoms may not be as effective as other forms of birth control, and a vasectomy is a commitment. Although

a vasectomy can be reversed, it is still more than most are willing to do.

The other form of male birth control is a shot that is inserted into the penis and contains a gel that stops sperm. Research on this topic began in India with Dr. Sujoy Kumar Guha, who has been pursuing it for over 50 years. This male birth control shot is called RISUG, or reversible inhibition of sperm under guidance. In the U.S., other research teams have come up with something similar to RISUG.

This film was full of information surrounding the process of male birth control. It also offered the perspectives of women and what they are put through with birth control and all of the responsibilities that come with it. I appreciated learning about this option that hopefully becomes a more prevalent form of contraception in the future.

The development of male birth control gives the opportunity to even out the burden of women taking birth control with little side effects. The question the



A still from "Give It a Shot." CONTRIBUTED | BIG SKY DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL

documentary presented was if men will be interested in this shot or not. I was surprised to see that a lot of men were interested and willing. It seems that the shot will take some more time to

be available to the public, but it would offer a much more consistent form of contraception for men.

- Izzy Slaughter, arts reporter



A still from "Correct Me if I'm Wrong." CONTRIBUTED | BIG SKY DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL

'CORRECT ME IF I'M WRONG' DIRECTED BY HAO ZHOU, PRODUCED BY TYLER HILL

Directed by the subject of the documentary, "Correct Me If I'm Wrong" focuses on a family's attempt to erase their grandchild's queer identity.

Heartwrenchingly intimate, Hao Zhou takes the viewer into their life that is filled with people trying to take away part of their identity. Grandparents whisper in their ear for the "demon girl" to get out. A wise woman explains that there are three spirits inside of them, one of which is their aborted older sister.

His mother, erratic when drunk, wishes for the "girly" part of Zhou to get out. As the attempts to eradicate Zhou's

queerness increase in both scale and expense, the viewer feels more and more pressure. Music, pacing and camera angles allow the viewers to immerse themselves in an unaccepting family.

Zhou's strength in their identity is admirable. Despite the pressure to live as another version of themselves, they continue trying to explain that they can not, and will not, change themselves. A heartbreaking story of queerness in southwest China, be aware that the emotional impact is high — but absolutely worth it.

- Bee Reiswig, arts reporter

Lady Griz hoping to heat up at the right time

DILLON RICHARDSON | SPORTS REPORTER

dillon.richardson@umontana.edu

The University of Montana's women's basketball team is winding down its 2025-26 season, and while the year has been disappointing at times, the team knows that anything is possible in the postseason.

As of Feb. 23, the Lady Griz are 4-11 in Big Sky Conference play and 7-19 overall. Sitting in eighth place with three games left, the team is guaranteed to finish in the bottom half of the conference for the second-straight regular season. That means that it will be a tough road for the Lady Griz in the conference tournament, which is from March 7-11 in Boise, Idaho.

Lady Griz head coach Nate Harris, who is in his first full season as head coach, said that despite the team's record, there have been good signs in every game, but the team needs consistency.

"I think there's a stretch in every game where we've shown that we can compete," Harris said. "We just have too many down stretches."

After taking over mid-season last year, Harris led the team to the conference championship game as an interim coach, and he said this year's team could do the same.

"We just have to find some juice down the stretch that's going to carry us," he said. "We have to be more consistent."

Harris said that the team has showcased a wide range throughout the season.

"We have a really high high that we have not tapped into yet, and we've seen some of the lows in stretches where we just don't have the level of intensity," he said. "The sky's the limit for this team. I'll never stop believing that, but we have a long way to go to get there."

For the team to get better, Harris said they just need to keep working.

"Practice, embrace the challenge of it all and understand that everything we want is on the other side," he said.

One player who has contributed to the team her entire college career is senior Mack Konig, who missed significant time due to injury this season, and Harris said it is good for the team to have her back.

"Mack's an incredibly talented basketball player. You're not going to find many people with the talent level and the career that she's had," Harris said. "She's somebody that can do a lot of things on a basketball floor. We've just got to continue to work her back into what we're doing."

Konig said that while it was nice that the team was winning without her, she couldn't wait any longer to get back on the court.

"I was just itching to get back," she said. "As a senior, you only have so much time left."

With her final season down to its last few games, Konig said it's bittersweet that her career is almost done.

"It really has demonstrated to me how much I've grown as a person," Konig said. "It can be really intimidating sometimes just because of how much I love playing here."

As the only senior on the Lady Griz, Konig said her final season has been exciting because of how young the team is.

"I do think that our team goes through some ups and downs just because we're pretty new and pretty fresh," she said. "I think that's been really interesting to see how it's played out."

Like Harris, Konig said she believes there's nothing stopping the team from winning in Boise.

"[We] can do anything, especially in the tournament when it's so quick," Konig said. "You have no idea what's going to happen."

Another player that has been a star for UM has been sophomore Avery Waddington, who has had a breakout year, leading the team in total minutes, points and rebounds.

Waddington said the team is still working hard to achieve its goals despite the tough season.

"Losing sucks, to be honest," Waddington said. "We keep showing up every day to practice, and working hard every day."

She said the return of Konig has been big for the team.

"She's a very confident player, and I think it brings confidence to others as well," Waddington said. "She's very good at controlling the ball with teams that press us a little more. It's really nice having her back."

Waddington said she thinks the Lady

Griz can go on a run similar to last year once again.

"I think we can win out from here on out," she said. "We can really turn the season around. It's not over yet. Finishing the [regular] season well would give us a good entryway into the tournament."

The team heads to the west coast for games in Portland and Sacramento this week before the regular season finale in Dahlberg Arena on March 2 against the University of Northern Colorado.



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Griz men's lacrosse start strong in teamwork and wins

TIAAN VALDEZ | SPORTS REPORTER

tiaan.valdez@umontana.edu

A fast start can define a season, and for the Griz men's lacrosse team, the tone has been set early.

The Griz sit at 3-0 after defeating Arizona Christian University, the University of Denver and the University of California San Diego. All three matchups took place at Legacy Stadium in Aurora, Colorado, on Feb. 13-15, which gave the team an early opportunity to build a rhythm in a focused, competitive environment.

From the first face-off of the season opener against Arizona Christian, the Griz played with composure. The 13-9 victory wasn't flawless, but it reflected preparation and trust.

"Our team has a great mix of upper and underclassmen players this year," captain Reese Baron said. "It keeps us focused as the new guys continue to learn and improve, while our older guys, like myself, get to take a larger leadership role and find our places on the field in this new season."

That foundation carried into a competitive matchup against Denver on Feb. 14. In the 12-8 win, Denver seemingly sought to take control of the match, driving 3-2 points in the first quarter. Within the next quarter, the Griz picked up the game, carrying the lead with six additional points scored, which helped UM maintain control for the remainder of the matchup.

However, the undefeated start is about much more than the numbers on the scoreboard. It's also about the familial relationships the team has built along the way.

"This year is no different," captain Mason Slapper said. "Fresh-faced and a strong freshman class with the work ethic to match has brought in an energy and excitement into the team that has been contagious to even the seniors."

The outlook has become central to the Griz's identity this season. Building a foundation gives the team clear direction as it works toward the conference championship and moves forward to nationals.

"We just want to see the team improving each day of practice and each weekend of competition at home or on the road," Baron said. "We'll see this in our practices as our passing gets crisp, our shooting becomes more dialed and everyone is executing our defensive packages effectively."

While the 3-0 record is impressive, especially in Division II of the Pacific Northwest Collegiate Lacrosse League, the team still has to remain focused and confident in its future matchups. Defense plays a big part in these matches, giving



Senior lacrosse player Bo Sterling shoots during a scrimmage at a team practice on Feb. 19.

JACKSON MAILEY | MONTANA KAIMIN

offense an opportunity to perform with ease.

"Joey [Cortner], our goalie, has been playing phenomenal to start the year," Baron said. "He's the centerpiece to our defense. Without him, our start would be looking a lot rougher, but our three starting defensemen and the rest of the defense have also been locking down our opponents each game so far."

Leadership in club sports can be uniquely challenging. Without the structure of varsity programs, much of the accountability must come from within. For the Griz captains, that means setting the tone every day, and not just on game days.

During the offseason, it's noted that every player, whether a starter or long-term player, has a role that impacts outcomes. That is when bonds with one another are made and become memorable.

"I remember the seniors and captains I was fortunate enough to play with during my freshman year," Slapper said. "They left this program better than they found it, and I genuinely hope I can say the same after this season, whether it's coaching up the younger guys at practice, or starting traditions that continue after I am gone."

That approach has fostered a team environment where feedback is welcomed rather than resisted. Players put in 100% of their effort in practice, knowing the goal is collective growth. Mistakes are corrected quickly, and focus shifts to the next play.

Despite the strong start, leadership within the team remains measured. An unbeaten record provides confidence, but Slapper sees it as a foundation rather than a finish line. Beyond just wins and losses,

having a clear direction through the program and support from teammates is more important.

"This trust and closeness will be crucial as the season goes on and competition gets tougher," Slapper continued. "Knowing that 25 guys have your back, regardless if you make a great play or a terrible mistake, truly allows you to go out there and play your best lacrosse."

That humility may be the most telling sign of leadership maturity. Instead of celebrating early success, realize that mistakes will be made, but achievements will show in the long run.

Competing in the Pacific Northwest Collegiate Lacrosse League presents a long season with evolving challenges, which is expected. As opponents adjust and intensity rises, the Griz have an emphasis on culture, and accountability will be tested.

For now, though, the team demonstrated that leadership is more than a title. It is a daily commitment to preparation, to teammates, and to a shared standard.

"If you have played sports in your life, you know how rare it is to end up on a team where everyone truly plays for each other, and everyone is treated equally and that is exactly what we have," Slapper said.

Three wins into the season, the Griz men's club lacrosse team has shown that success begins long before game day. It starts in practice, in tough conversations, and through shared expectations.

If the first stretch of the season is any indication, that leadership-driven foundation may carry them far beyond a 3-0 start.

SPORTS BRIEFS

HANNAH BENITEZ | SPORTS EDITOR

hannah.benitez@umontana.edu

OFF TO A BAD START

University of Montana softball fell to the North Florida Ospreys 7-2 and to the Grand Canyon University Antelopes 8-0 in the Purple Classic.

UM now sits in the fifth spot in the Big Sky Conference standings with a record of 4-11.

The Griz batted over .170 over five games and were limited to only six runs.

Grace Lopez is the Grizzlies' top batter, with an batting average of .354 and has 10 runs with 48 trips up to bat.

Pitcher Cameryn Ortega leads the team with a 4.58 earned runs average in five games played.

In the past five games, the Griz only were able to get seven runs out of the 42 runners that were on base.

Out of the 15 games of the season, the Griz only scored 55 runs compared to the 102 scored by its opponents.

"We had some teams that had some really good pitching performances and we struggled offensively," head coach Stef Ewing said.

LOSING ON THE ROAD

Griz men's basketball lost its third straight game on the road to the Weber State University Wildcats 92-72 on Feb. 21.

The Wildcats' Viljami Vartiainen scored 25 points from the three point line, while Money Williams and Kenyon Aguino both scored 15 points for the Griz.

The Wildcats led the Griz in all categories except in free throws. The Griz made 82%, compared to 81% for the Wildcats.

"Vartiainen was having the game of his life to start, and we started slowly," head coach Travis DeCuire said to UM Athletics. "Last time we played them we scored a ton of points in the paint and we wanted to attack that, but the ball wasn't going in."

Students thrift free business attire

WESTON FUDGE | PHOTOGRAPHER
weston.fudge@umontana.edu

The chatter and screech of clothes hangers sliding across racks filled the room as students wandered between isles of free business attire, searching for something that could boost their wardrobe for an interview.

The University of Montana's Center for Experiential Learning and Career Success hosted a Future Fit Check on the second floor of the University Center on Feb. 19. The event was the third of nine activities for the Career Days series, which aims to prepare students for careers after college.

Part of UC 250 transformed into a

thrift shop, with racks of blouses and dresses, as well as suit jackets and slacks. Across the room, three representatives from UM's Career Center answered students' questions and provided information about its services.

Students like Cole Cunningham, 24, a senior psychology major from Butte, appreciated the support and guidance.

"I remember even being a freshman, just being so lost," Cunningham said. "There's so many big questions, like what do I do next when it comes to resumes and cover letters and personal statements and all that."

The goal of the Career Days series is to prepare students to pursue their goals, according to Stacy Ulery, associate

director of career success at UM's Career Center.

"We saw a need for students to have a free way to access professional clothing and boost up their professional image, and a lot of community partners who are willing and eager to donate really great items," Ulery said.

As part of the Future Fit Check, students were given a checklist they could complete by visiting each of the career stations. Once finished, the paper could be turned in for the student to be entered into a raffle for a Griz camping chair. Just for attending a Career Days event, students are automatically entered into a raffle

that encompasses the entire Career Days series, with an Instax camera or Kodak photo printer as the grand prizes.

"We're really trying to help students be ready to present themselves to employers and secure great internship and job opportunities," Ulery said.

UM's Career Center will host a career fair prep event on March 2, before the Career Days series culminates on March 5 with the Hire Griz! Spring Career Fair, open to all majors and industries.

"Stuff like this is helpful, you know, especially for someone who is wanting to pursue grad school or, you know, going into their professional career, and this is super helpful, being able to have these resources available," Cunningham said.



Kaylee de Montigny, a theatre major from Helena, examines clothes at the career fair in UC 250.



Angie Thompson, assistant director of student engagement and AI education, explains ethical and green ways to use AI to computer science majors Thomas Butcher, left, from Wasilla, Alaska and Jace O'Reagan from Soldotna, Alaska, in UC 250 on Feb. 19.



A student fills out her Future Fit Checklist before entering the career fair.