



# BIG SKY CHAMPIONSHIP HISTORY

18 Big Sky Championships - 13 Big Sky Runner-up seasons

Montana has won the Big Sky or come in second in 30 of the league's 58 seasons.

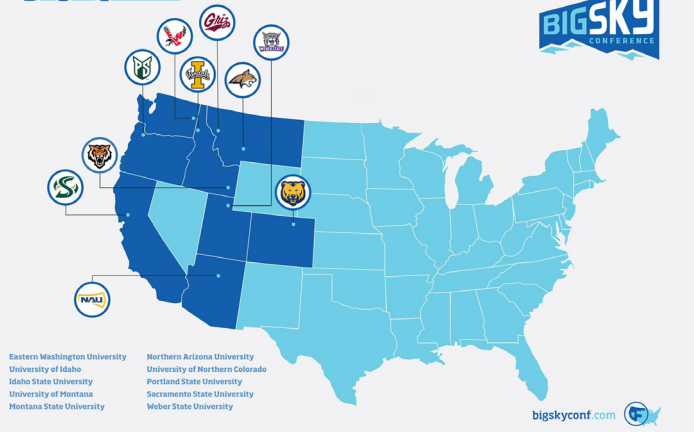
Year	Big Sky Champion(s)	Runner(s)up
1963	Idaho State (3-1)	Montana State (2-1)
1964	Montana State (3-0)	Idaho State (2-1)
1965	Weber State, Idaho (3-1)	Montana (2-2)
1966	Montana State (4-0)	Idaho (3-1)
1967	Montana State (4-0)	Montana, Weber State, Idaho (2-2)
1968	Weber State, Idaho, Montana State (3-1)	
1969	MONTANA (4-0)	Weber State (3-1)
1970	MONTANA (6-0)	Idaho State (4-2)
1971	Idaho (4-1)	Boise State (4-2)
1972	Montana State (5-1)	Idaho State (4-1)
1973	Boise State (6-0)	Montana State (5-1)
1974	Boise State (6-0)	Montana State (5-1)
1975	Boise State (5-0-1)	Idaho State, Montana State (4-2)
1976	Montana State (6-0)	Idaho (5-1)
1977	Boise State (6-0)	Northern Arizona (5-1)
1978	Northern Arizona	Montana, Montana State (4-2)
1979	Montana State (6-1)	Nevada (5-2)
1980	Boise State (6-1)	Idaho (4-3)
1981	Idaho State, Boise State (6-1)	Montana (5-2)
1982	MONTANA, Idaho, Montana State (5-2)	
1983	Nevada (6-1)	Idaho State (5-2)
1984	Montana State (6-1)	Nevada (5-2)
1985	Idaho (6-1)	Nevada (6-1)
1986	Nevada (7-0)	NAU, Idaho (5-2)
1987	Idaho (7-1)	Weber State (7-1)
1988	Idaho (7-1)	Montana (6-2)
1989	Idaho (8-0)	Montana (7-1)
1990	Nevada (7-1)	Idaho, Boise State (6-2)
1991	Nevada (8-0)	Montana (6-2)
1992	Idaho (6-1)	Eastern Washington (6-1)
1993	MONTANA (7-0)	Idaho, Eastern Washington (5-2)
1994	Boise State (6-1)	Montana, Idaho (5-2)
1995	MONTANA (6-1)	Boise State, Idaho, NAU, WSU (4-3)
1996	MONTANA (8-0)	Northern Arizona (7-1)
1997	Eastern Washington (7-1)	Montana (6-2)
1998	MONTANA (6-2)	Cal St. Northridge, Montana St. (5-3)
1999	MONTANA (7-1)	PSU, NAU, EWU (6-2)
2000	MONTANA (8-0)	Portland St., Sac St., Weber St. (5-3)
2001	MONTANA (7-0)	Northern Arizona, Portland St. (5-2)
2002	MONTANA, Idaho State, Montana State (5-2)	
2003	MONTANA, Montana State, Northern Arizona (5-2)	
2004	MONTANA, Eastern Washington (6-1)	MSU, PSU (4-3)
2005	MONTANA, EWU, Montana State (5-2)	PSU, WSU (4-3)
2006	MONTANA (8-0)	Montana State, Portland State (6-2)
2007	MONTANA (8-0)	Eastern Washington (6-2)
2008	MONTANA, Weber State (7-1)	EWU, Montana State (5-3)
2009	MONTANA (8-0)	Eastern Washington, Weber State (6-2)
2010	EWU, MSU (7-1)	Montana, Sac State, WSU (5-3)
2011	Montana State (7-1)	PSU, EWU, WSU (5-3)
2012	Eastern Wash., Montana St., Cal Poly (7-1)	NAU (6-2)
2013	Eastern Wash. (8-0)	Northern Arizona (7-1)
2014	Eastern Wash. (7-1)	Idaho St., Montana, MSU (6-2)
2015	Southern Utah (7-1)	Montana, Portland State (6-2)
2016	North Dakota, Eastern Wash. (8-0)	Weber State (6-2)
2017	Weber State, Southern Utah (7-1)	EWU, SAC, NAU (6-2)
2018	Eastern Wash., UC Davis, Weber St. (7-1)	MSU, ISU (5-3)
2019	Weber St., Sac. St. (7-1)	Montana, MSU, EWU (6-2)
2020-21	Weber St.* (5-0)	EWU (5-1)
2021	Sacramento St. (8-0)	Montana St. (7-1)
2022	Sacramento St., Montana St. (8-0)	WSU, Idaho (6-2)

## MONTANA'S FINAL FCS RANKINGS

1982	NCAA	19th
1988	NCAA	19th
1989	NCAA	6th
1993	The Sports Network	3rd
1994	The Sports Network	8th
1995	The Sports Network	1st
1996	The Sports Network	2nd
1997	The Sports Network	11th
1998	The Sports Network	14th
1999	The Sports Network	7th
2000	The Sports Network	2nd
2001	The Sports Network	1st
2002	The Sports Network	9th
2003	The Sports Network	14th
2004	The Sports Network	2nd
2005	The Sports Network	12th
2006	The Sports Network	3rd
2007	The Sports Network	10th
2008	The Sports Network	2nd
2009	The Sports Network	2nd
2010	The Sports Network	20th
2011	The Sports Network	4th
2012	Not Ranked	-
2013	The Sports Network	8th
2014	The Sports Network	12th
2015	STATS FCS	14th
2016	NCAA Coaches	25th
2017	Received Votes	RV
2018	Received Votes	RV
2019	STATS FCS	6th
2020-21	NA*	NA
2021	STATS FCS	6th
2022	STATS FCS	14th

\*Montana opted to play a two-game spring season in 2021 instead of a full FCS season.

## BIG SKY COUNTRY



A founding member of the Big Sky Conference, Montana was one of six institutions to join the league in 1963 along with Idaho, Idaho State, Montana State, Weber State, and Gonzaga (for all sports except football).



**POSTSEASON YEAR-BY-YEAR**

**FCS/1-AA RECORD 26 PLAYOFF APPEARANCES:  
7 CHAMPIONSHIP - 10 SEMIFINAL - 14 QUARTERFINAL**

Year	Opponent/Location	Round	W/L	Score
2022	Southeast Missouri	1st	W	34-24
	at North Dakota State	2nd	L	26-49
2021	Eastern Washington	2nd	W	57-41
	at James Madison	QF	L	6-28
2019	Southeastern Louisiana	2nd	W	73-28
	at Weber State	QF	L	10-17
2015	South Dakota State	1st	W	24-17
	at North Dakota State	2nd	L	6-37
2014	San Diego	1st	W	52-14
	at Eastern Washington	2nd	L	20-37
2013	Costal Carolina	2nd	L	35-42
2011	Central Arkansas #	2nd	W	41-14
	Northern Iowa #	QF	W	48-10
	at Sam Houston State #	SF	L	28-31
2009	South Dakota State	1st	W	61-48
	Stephen F. Austin	QF	W	51-0
	Appalachian State	SF	W	24-17
	vs. Villanova	Final	L	21-23
2008	Texas State	1st	W	31-13
	Weber State	QF	W	24-12
	at James Madison	SF	W	35-27
	vs Richmond	Final	L	7-24
2007	Wofford	1st	L	22-23
2006	McNeese State	1st	W	31-6
	Southern Illinois	QF	W	20-3
	Umass	SF	L	17-19
2005	Cal Poly	1st	L	21-35
2004	Northwestern State	1st	W	57-7
	New Hampshire	QF	W	47-17
	Sam Houston State	SF	W	34-13
	vs James Madison	Final	L	21-31
2003	Western Illinois	1st	L	40-43
2002	Northwestern State	1st	W	45-14
	at McNeese State	QF	L	20-24
2001	Northwestern State	1st	W	28-19
	Sam Houston State	QF	W	49-24
	Northern Iowa	SF	W	38-0
	vs Furman	Final	W	13-6
2000	Eastern Illinois	1st	W	45-14
	Richmond	QF	W	37-17
	Appalachian State	SF	W	19-16
	vs Georgia Southern	Final	L	25-27

Year	Opponent/Location	Round	W/L	Score
1999	Youngstown State	1st	L	27-30
1998	at Western Illinois	1st	L	9-52
1997	at McNeese State	1st	L	14-19
1996	Nicholls State	1st	W	48-3
	East Tennessee State	QF	W	44-14
	Troy State	SF	W	70-7
	at Marshall	Final	L	29-49
1995	Eastern Kentucky	1st	W	48-0
	Georgia Southern	QF	W	45-0
	Stephen F. Austin	SF	W	70-14
	at Marshall	Final	W	22-20
1994	Northern Iowa	1st	W	23-20
	McNeese State	QF	W	30-28
	at Youngstown State	SF	L	9-28
1993	Delaware	1st	L	48-49
1989	Jackson State	1st	W	48-7
	Eastern Illinois	QF	W	25-19
	at Georgia Southern	SF	L	14-45
1988	at Idaho	1st	L	19-38
1982	at Idaho	1st	L	7-21

**FCS/1-AA Playoffs**

**26 Playoff Appearances\*\* - 35-24 Overall**

59 Games: 32-7 Home, 2-13 Road, 1-4 Neutral

(#Games/Appearance vacated due to NCAA infractions)

\*\* FCS Record

**COLLEGE DIVISION (0-2, NEUTRAL)**

Year	Opponent/Location	W/L	Score
1969	North Dakota State^	L	3-30
1970	North Dakota State^	L	16-31

^Camilia Bowl (College Division National Championship Game) played at Sacramento, Calif.

\* indicates conference game

**GRIZ POST-SEASON HISTORY****2022: GRIZ ENDURE TOUGH ROAD SCHEDULE TO RETURN TO PLAYOFFS**

Grizzly football in 2022 was a tale of two halves. Montana started the year with championship expectations, picked by the league's coaches and media to win the program's first Big Sky title in over a decade.

For the first five games of the season, the Griz lived up to those lofty expectations as well, dominating their first half opponents by a combined score of 201-57 to start the year at 5-0 and climb to as high as No. 2 in the national polls.

When the calendar turned to October, however, the Grizzlies' gauntlet of a schedule got the best of them. The old rival Idaho Vandals shocked UM 30-23 in Missoula for their first win in Missoula since the turn of the century. Montana then hit the road and suffered two more narrow losses to No. 2 Sac State and No. 5 Weber State, each by a touchdown or less and each with several key injuries, to leave UM winless in October.

Even after suffering another loss to MSU in November, the Griz advanced to the playoffs for a record 26th time and defeated Southeast Missouri State in Missoula in the opening round in comeback fashion, 34-24.

The season came to an end in Fargo, where big plays cost the Griz in a 49-26 loss to the NDSU Bison.

**2021: MONTANA RETURNS TO QUARTERFINAL FOR SECOND-STRAIGHT SEASON**

After missing a year of play due to the pandemic, Montana returned to the FCS quarterfinal round for a second-straight season to extend its FCS-record playoff appearance total to 25.

Montana would reach the 10-win plateau for a second-straight season as well, finishing at 10-3 overall and 6-2 in the Big Sky in a tie for third.

The Griz started the season with one of the biggest wins in program history, defeating the No. 20 Washington Huskies in Seattle for the first time in a century. It was just the sixth time an FCS/1-AA team has beaten a ranked FBS team since 1983.

UM then rattled off home wins over Western Illinois and Cal Poly to start the year at 3-0. Montana suffered its first defeat after piling up injuries at Eastern Washington following an early bye week in the 2021 season.

The Griz would rebound, however, to win six of their last seven, including a dominating win over Montana State and redemption against

EWU in the second round of the playoffs with a 57-41 victory. Montana suffered more injuries in the quarterfinal game at No. 3 James Madison in a 6-28 loss.

In a high-flying second round home win over EWU, Montana withstood an Eagle aerial attack that racked up over 500 passing yards, but the Grizzlies dominated in the run game and on special teams to control the contest. UM also came out firing in the second half, outscoring the Eagles 21-7 in the third quarter to seal the win.

During Montana's six game win streak, the Grizzly defense went on an unprecedented streak of 14-straight quarters without allowing an opponent to score a touchdown and allowing just 13 points to be scored against them in the final three games of the regular season.

**2019: GRIZ RETURN TO FCS QUARTERFINALS TO SNAP THREE-YEAR PLAYOFF DROUGHT**

In his second season since returning to Montana, head coach Bobby Hauck led the Grizzlies back to the quarterfinal round of the FCS playoffs for the first time since in 2009 - the final year of his record-breaking first stint at UM.

Under Hauck, the 2019 Grizzlies extended their FCS-record playoff appearances to 24 with a 10-4 overall record - the first 10-win season since 2013. Linebacker Dante Olson was Montana's third-ever FCS Defensive Player of the Year, and receiver Samori Toure set a new school record for most receiving yards in a season.

After starting the season 5-1 with a statement win over then-No. 4 UC Davis and a relatively narrow loss to the Oregon Ducks, Montana picked up key home wins over rivals Eastern Washington, Idaho, and No. 3 Weber State down the stretch to finish the regular season 9-3 to earn a first-round bye in the playoffs.

The Grizzlies hosted Southeastern Louisiana in the second round after the Lions defeated Villanova the week prior in round one. Montana went on a scoring blitz, defeating SELA 73-28 on the back of Toure, who broke NFL Hall of Famer Randy Moss' FCS playoff record with 303 receiving yards and three TDs.

Montana then went on to play Weber State for a second time that season, this time traveling to Ogden to face the No. 3 Wildcats in a whiteout blizzard. The Montana defense held WSU to just 113 yards of offense, but the offense gave up five interceptions and the Wildcats scored what would be the game-winning touchdown on a blocked punt for a 17-10 final score.

**2016-18: GRIZ MISS THREE-STRAIGHT POSTSEASONS**

2018: A last-second fumble on a sure touchdown spelled disaster for the Grizzlies yet again in a make-or-break rivalry game against Montana State to miss the playoffs for a third year.

2017: Montana went 7-4 in 2017, but suffered another disappointing loss to Montana State to eliminate the Griz from playoff contention for a second-straight year.

2016: After being ranked as high as #6 in the nation, the Grizzlies dropped four of their last five games in the depths of a brutal road schedule to fall out of playoff contention.

**2015: STITT LEADS GRIZ TO PLAYOFFS IN INAUGURAL SEASON**

In their first year under head coach Bob Stitt, the Grizzlies made yet another appearance in the NCAA FCS/DI-AA playoffs, extending the school's record number of postseason appearances to 23, and advanced to the second round of the FCS playoffs.

The Griz finished the 2015 season at 8-5 (6-2 BSC) in Fargo, North Dakota, after falling to North Dakota State 37-6 in the season's rubber match between the two FCS powers. Montana defeated NDSU 38-35 to open the season on ESPN in Missoula.

Before earning a trip to Fargo, the Grizzlies defeated South Dakota State 24-17 in the opening round of the playoffs at Washington-Grizzly Stadium.

Montana finished the regular season on a three-game win streak, and with the return of starting quarterback Brady Gustafson from injury, dismantled two of the team's biggest rivalries in the last two weeks of the season, defeating Eastern Washington 57-16 in Missoula, then traveling to Bozeman and defeating Montana State 54-35.

The winning streak was good enough for the Griz to claim a share of second place in the Big Sky Conference, and earn an at-large bid to the playoffs, where the NCAA selection committee awarded UM a home game against South Dakota State on November 28.

FIRST ROUND: Montana 24-South Dakota State 17

The No. 16 ranked Grizzlies scored all 24 of their points in the first half and held off a late rally by the No. 10 Jackrabbits to claim their third first-round win in three years.

The Griz racked up 293 yards of total offense in the first half alone, and finished with 434 yards, 295 of which came in the air for Brady Gustafson who went 24-39 and passed for a pair of touchdowns.

The Grizzly defense proved the difference maker, with Tyrone Holmes taking three sacks and Jeremiah Kose recovering a fumble to thwart the Jackrabbits' comeback.

SECOND ROUND: Montana 6- NDSU 37



On the flip side of the coin, the Grizzlies gave up 24 unanswered points to open the second round playoff game at the Fargodome against North Dakota State.

The Bison returned two interceptions for touchdowns and delivered the final blow to the Grizzlies with a 100-yard kick return by Bruce Anderson immediately following the only touchdown of the day for the Griz.

NDSU would carry on to win the program's fifth-straight FCS National Championship.

## 2014: GRIZ ADVANCE TO SECOND ROUND PLAYOFF GAMES

Montana extended its record number of appearances in the division I-AA/FCS playoffs to 22.

UM dominated on both sides of the football, and the result was a 52-14 victory over the visiting Toreros in a first round NCAA FCS playoff game.

The Grizzlies scored on six of their first eight possessions in the first half and held the Toreros (9-3) of the Pioneer Football League scoreless, to jump to an insurmountable 38-0 halftime lead. The Grizzlies then scored on all four of their possessions in the second quarter.

Sophomore running back John Nguyen started UM's second quarter scoring onslaught by scoring on a 60-yard punt return, which was his first TD return and the longest punt return of his career, and gave the Griz a 21-0 lead.

UM tallied two more unanswered TDs on scoring throws of 18 and 12 yards by senior QB Shay Smithwick-Hann to redshirt freshman receiver Josh Janssen (with 7:37 to go in the third quarter) and senior wide-out Kevin Berland.

USD finally scored with 6:05 left to play on a scoring pass from halfback Dallas Kessman to freshman wide receiver Justin Priest from 27 yards out. Priest scored again on an 11-yard touchdown throw from junior QB Trey Wheeler.

The Grizzlies out-gained the Toreros 315 to 17 in total yards, and had 18 first downs compared to USD's one. Most of Montana's starters played in just the first half.

The second time was not the charm for the unseeded 12th-ranked Grizzlies, as comeback-minded Montana lost for the second time in 2014 to the 4th-ranked Eastern Washington Eagles in a second round NCAA Division I FCS playoff game at EWU's Roos Field.

It was the final game for third-year head coach Mick Delaney, as he had announced recently that he would step down at the conclusion of the 2014 season. Montana ended its season with a 9-5 record and went 6-2 (tie, second) in the Big Sky Conference.

The Eagles (11-2) were led by junior quarterback Vernon Adams Jr. who passed for two touchdowns and ran for another, while senior halfback Quincy Forte rushed for 128 yards and a TD. Host EWU had defeated UM 36-26 earlier this season in a Big Sky Conference game on Nov. 8.

The Grizzlies had kept their comeback chance possible with 6:29 remaining, when QB Jordan Johnson connected with senior wide receiver/halfback Travon Van on a 30-yard touch-down pass, cutting EWU lead to 10 points (30-20).

Montana then stayed in the game when it stopped EWU on a fourth down conversion on an interception of Adams by junior linebacker Jeremiah Kose in the end zone. But, on UM's next play from scrimmage the Eagles put the game out of reach, as safety Todd Raynes picked off a pass and returned it 40 yards, giving EWU a 37-20 lead and the final points of the game, thus ending Montana's chances to advance further in the playoffs.

## 2013: MONTANA WINS 10 GAMES EN ROUTE TO 21ST BERTH IN PLAYOFFS

Montana won seven of its last eight regular-season games and earned an at-large berth into the Football Championship Subdivision playoffs, its 21st in school history.

The host Griz lost 42-37 to 11th-ranked Coastal Carolina in the second round.

The 10-3 Grizzlies were led by three senior linebackers, who all ended their careers ranked among UM's all-time leaders in career tackles. That dynamic trio consisted of Jordan Tripp (fourth, 335 total tackles), Brock Coyle (12th, 293 TT), and J.P. Kanongata'a (17th, 269 TT).

Junior end Zack Wagenmann had a team-high 16.5 tackles for loss and was a first team All-Big Sky Conference pick for the second season in a row.

UM also had stellar seasons on offense by running back Jordan Canada, wide receiver/returner Ellis Henderson, and quarterback Jordan Johnson. Canada rushed for 1,062 yards and 16 touchdowns; Henderson racked up 1,008 receiving yards and 145 TDs; and Johnson passed for 3,387 yards and 32 touchdowns.

## 2012: GRIZ MISS PLAYOFFS FOR THE SECOND TIME IN THE PAST 20 SEASONS

For the just the second time in the past 20 seasons the Grizzlies did not advance to the FCS playoffs. Montana finished 5-6 overall and had its first losing season in 27 years (since going 3-8 in 1985). It was also the first time in 20 seasons that the Griz have not finished first or second in the Big Sky Conference.

In October of 2012 Montana dropped out of *The Sports Network's* FCS Top 25 poll for the first time since 1998. That ended a run of 195 straight appearances, dating back to the Nov. 2, 1998 poll.

## 2011: MONTANA ADVANCES TO FCS SEMIS FOR THE 20TH TIME

The Grizzlies returned to the playoffs after a one year hiatus, advancing to the FCS semifinal, and suffered a 31-28 loss to host, top-ranked, and undefeated (14-0) Sam Houston State. It was Montana's 18th playoff berth in the past

19 seasons and 20th overall. UM has won (or shared) 13 of the past 15 Big Sky Conference championships.

Montana out-scored the Kats 14-3 in the second half and advanced the ball to the SHSU 49-yard line on its final drive, but was forced to punt, and Flanders rushed eight times for 63 yards, including a 22-yarder on a fourth down, to ice the victory.

The Griz defense held SHSU to two total first downs in the second half prior to the Bearcats' final drive. Halfback Tim Flanders led SHSU, rushing for 287 yards on 26 carries, and led a potent ground attack that amassed 383 yards.

Senior linebacker Caleb McSurdy led a defense that featured nine senior starters, and he was named the Big Sky Conference's MVP on defense.

Record-setting senior kicker/punter Brody McKnight booted a league-record 210 PATs. Jabin Sambrano, also a senior, became just the second player in school history (the other one was "Will Bill" Kelly in 1926) to score a touchdown rushing, receiving, and via punt and kick-off returns in a season.

Second-year head coach Robin Pflugrad was named the Big Sky's "Coach of the Year," as the Griz went 11-3 overall and placed first in the league with a 7-1 mark. NOTE: Montana would later vacate five wins, Big Sky title, and its participation in FCS playoff games due to NCAA violations, finishing with an "official record" of 6-2.

## 2010: PLAYOFF RUN HALTED/REYNOLDS ENDS HIS BRILLIANT CAREER

It had to end some time, and unfortunately the first time in 18 seasons that Montana did not advance to the playoff was the final season of the illustrious career of halfback Chase Reynolds. Reynolds ended his record-breaking career by setting school records for total touchdowns (59) and rushing touchdowns (52), and was ended up only four yards short of the record for career rushing yards with 4,067, and he set all of those standards in just three seasons.

The Griz suffered a huge setback early in the year, when senior quarterback Andrew Selle suffered a career-ending injury in the fourth game of the season against Sacramento State.

## 2009: ANOTHER TRIP TO THE FCS CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Montana played in the FCS championship game for the second year in a row and seventh time in the last 15 seasons, but second-ranked Villanova rushed 51 times for 351 yards in a 23-21 Griz loss. It was the top-ranked Grizzlies' only loss (14-1) of the season.

UM's road to the title game was a difficult one. The Griz trailed 11th-ranked South Dakota State by 27 points (48-21) with 5:40 left in the third quarter, but out-scored SDSU 40-0 on their way to a 61-48 victory. A week later UM forced 10 turnovers and crushed 12th-ranked, visiting Stephen F. Austin 51-0 in a quarterfinal



contest.

Montana's semifinal against fifth-ranked Appalachian State and quarterback Armani Edwards was a classic. The game was played in front of a national audience on ESPN and came down to the last play. Selle floated a 25-yard TD pass to Sambrano with 1:31 left to give the Griz a 24-17 lead. However, Edwards drove ASU to Montana's 3-yard line, but his last-second TD pass was broken up, and the Grizzlies earned their seventh trip to the title game.

Mariani broke numerous receiving and return records, and Reynolds tied his own single-season record by rushing for 22 TDs. Selle passed for 28 TDs. Linebacker Shawn Lebsock and safety Shann Schillinger ended their careers as two of the leading tacklers in school history. Head coach Bobby Hauck, who left UM for UNLV following the 2009 season, advanced to the FCS playoffs all seven of his seasons as the head man, and won or shared seven league championships.

### **2008: MONTANA PLAYS FOR ITS SIXTH NATIONAL TITLE**

Despite losing 14 starters, Montana made it to the FCS title game for the sixth time, losing 24-7 to Richmond in Chattanooga. In the first round Montana handled Texas State 31-13. In the quarterfinals the Grizzlies avenged an early-season league loss (45-28) at Weber State, defeating the 10th-ranked Wildcats 24-13. In the FCS semi-final game Montana had its biggest playoff road win ever, beating top-ranked James Madison 35-27.

Senior quarterback Cole Bergquist passed for 3,156 yards and 28 touchdowns, and wide-out Mike Ferriter finished his career ranked ninth in school history with 2,089 receiving yards. Reynolds rushed for a (then) school-record 22 touchdowns. The defense was led by strong safety Colt Anderson, a Buck Buchanan Award finalist, who was Montana's leading tackler with 129 stops.

### **2007: 15TH FCS PLAYOFF APPEARANCE IN A ROW**

The Griz made their 15th playoff appearance and their 18th overall, which moved them past Eastern Kentucky for the most in division history. Montana suffered a rare home loss in the playoffs, though, a 23-22 setback to Wofford.

Senior defensive end Kroy Biermann became Montana's first ever Buck Buchanan Award winner. Senior halfback Lex Hilliard set a record with 50 career rushing touchdowns, which Reynolds would break three seasons later. Kicker Dan Carpenter set FCS career records with 75 field goals and points scored by a kicker with 413. Senior linebackers Tyler Joyce and Kyle Ryan finished second and sixth in UM history with 352 and 304 career tackles, respectively.

### **2006: A TRIP TO THE SEMIS**

Montana just missed playing for its sixth na-

tional title in the past 12 years. Host Montana defeated 22nd-ranked McNeese State 31-6 in an FCS first-round game, then knocked off visiting and No. 10-ranked Southern Illinois 20-3 in the quarterfinals, but were edged (19-17) out to third-ranked and visiting UMass in the semifinal game which was televised nationally on ESPN2. Hauck became the first Griz mentor in history to win four Big Sky titles.

After losing at 16th-ranked Iowa in its opener, Montana won 11 straight games and finished 12-2 overall and 8-0 in the Big Sky. Hilliard, a 2006 Walter Payton Award candidate, was lost for the season due to an injury in fall camp. Senior quarterback Josh Swogger threw 17 TD passes, while senior receivers Eric Allen, Ryan Bagley, and Craig Chambers combined for 147 catches and 17 scores. Halfbacks Reggie Bradshaw, Brady Green, and Thomas Brooks-Fletcher combined for 19 rushing touchdowns. UM's young defense was ranked ninth in the FCS in total defense, allowing 226.4 yards a game.

### **2005: GRIZ LOSE IN FIRST ROUND**

Montana was 8-4 overall and received an at-large bid into the playoffs. UM was led by Hilliard who rushed for 1,322 yards – the second highest total (at the time) in single-season history. The ninth-ranked Griz hosted a first-round home playoff game, losing 35-21 to 10th-ranked Cal Poly. Montana had defeated Cal Poly 36-27 in Missoula earlier in the season.

### **2004: FIFTH TRIP TO THE FCS TITLE GAME IN THE LAST 10 SEASONS**

Montana was 12-3 and advanced to the FCS championship game for the fifth time in the last 11 years. Senior quarterback Craig Ochs passed for 3,807 yards and 33 touchdowns and set a league record by completing 68.7% of his passes. Hilliard tied the school record for touchdown runs with 17, while senior wide receiver Jefferson Heidelberger had the second most receiving yards in single-season history with 1,240.

In the playoffs the host Griz handled their first three opponents at home relatively easy, beating Northwestern State (56-7), New Hampshire (47-17), and Sam Houston State (34-13). The title game was a 31-21 loss to James Madison. Sadly, the championship game was played on a field that was a quagmire, as the grass playing surface had recently been re-sodded.

### **2003: BREAK PLAYOFF RECORD WITH 11TH IN A ROW**

Montana broke the FCS record by making its 11th consecutive playoff appearance, eclipsing the mark of 10 that it had shared with Eastern Kentucky (10, from 1986-1995). The Griz received an at-large bid into the playoffs, losing a 43-40 double-overtime thriller to visiting Western Illinois in the first round.

Senior kicker Chris Snyder set four NCAA career FCS records, scoring 394 points and converting 182 PATs. He also set a single-season

school marks by scoring 123 points and connecting on 126 consecutive PATs. Senior defensive end Tim Bush finished his career as Montana's all-time career leader in sacks (32.5) and tackles for loss (48.5).

### **2002: TIE FCS MARK FOR CONSECUTIVE WINS**

The Griz started the season with 10 wins in a row, and, combined with 14 straight wins the year before, tied the FCS mark for consecutive wins with 24. The streak began on September 22 of 2001, with a 30-0 home win over Western Washington, and was halted on Nov. 16 of 2002, with a 30-21 setback at Eastern Washington in a game played in Spokane's Joe Albi Stadium.

Montana tied Pennsylvania, which had 24 wins in a row from 1992-95, for the longest winning skein in the division. The Griz also set the record for most consecutive Big Sky wins (25) and most league victories on the road with 13 in a row.

Senior quarterback John Edwards was named the Big Sky's co-MVP on offense and senior safety Trey Young was tabbed as the league's defensive player of the year.

Montana defeated Northwestern State 45-14 at home in a first-round playoff game, but lost 24-20 at McNeese State in a quarterfinal contest.

### **2001: SECOND NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP**

Montana won its second national championship by defeating Furman 13-6 en route to a 15-1 record. Edwards engineered a 16-play, 99-yard scoring drive for UM's only touchdown in the game. Halfback Yohance Humphery, Montana's all-time career rushing leader, gained 142 yards on 30 carries in the game and UM's only touchdown on a 2-yard run, which culminated its 99-yard scoring drive. The Griz defense limited the Paladins to 121 yards rushing and forced three turnovers. Furman's only score came on a Hail Mary pass as time expired. Humphery wrapped up his illustrious career with 4,070 career rushing yards.

The Grizzlies' 15 victories set a school record (which still stands as of 2013) for the most wins in a season.

### **2000: THIRD TRIP TO THE TITLE GAME**

The Griz earned a trip to the championship game for the third time in six seasons, losing a heart-breaker, 27-25 to Georgia Southern in Chattanooga. Starting senior Griz quarterback Drew Miller was injured late in the first quarter, and Edwards, a sophomore, was called into action.

The Griz trailed 20-3 at halftime in rain-soaked Finley Stadium, but took a 23-20 lead early in the fourth quarter on a scoring run by Humphery. The lead was short-lived though, as Eagle halfback and 2000 Walter Payton Award winner Adrian Peterson broke loose for a 57-



yard touchdown run early in the fourth quarter for the game-winning touchdown.

### 1999-97: GRIZ LOSE THREE STRAIGHT FIRST-ROUND GAMES

Montana dropped three first-round playoff games during this time, but in the 1999 season it set the Big Sky record with its seventh straight FCS playoff appearance, breaking the old standard of six that had been set by former Big Sky member Idaho from 1985-90.

In 1999, visiting Youngstown State, coached by Jim Tressel, kicked a late field goal for a 30-27 win. In 1998 Montana suffered its worst playoff setback ever — a 52-9 drubbing at Western Illinois. Montana's three-game playoff losing streak in the first round started in 1997 with a 19-14 setback at McNeese State.

### 1996: MOSS TOO MUCH IN QUEST FOR SECOND TITLE IN A ROW

Montana reeled off 14 straight wins to advance to the title game, and for the second year in a row they played at Marshall. Future NFL standout Randy Moss led Marshall with four touchdown catches in a 49-29 win.

It was the first time ever that two undefeated (14-0) teams had squared off for the title. In the championship game, Griz sophomore quarterback Brian Ah Yat set (then) playoff records for pass completions with 36 and total plays (67). Senior wide receiver Joe Douglass set a playoff record with 13 receptions, and he also set Montana single-season standards with 82 catches for 18 touchdowns (both still school records), and had 1,469 receiving yards, in UM's 11 regular-season games.

### 1995: FIRST NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

The Grizzlies won their first national championship with a last-second, 22-20 come-from-behind victory over host Marshall in front of an FCS playoff-record crowd of 32,106 (which still stands) in Huntington, West Virginia.

Walter Payton Award-winning quarterback Dave Dickenson passed for 1,219 yards and 11 touchdowns in Montana's first three playoff games, when UM out-scored its opponents 163-14. In their first three playoff victories, the host Grizzlies beat Eastern Kentucky (48-0), Georgia Southern (45-0), and Stephen F. Austin (70-14).

In the title game, Dickenson orchestrated a 12-play, 72-yard scoring drive, culminating with a 25-yard field goal by Andy Larson with 39 seconds left for the game-winner. The big play in the winning drive took place on a fourth-and-three from the 50-yard line, as Dickenson connected with senior wide receiver Mike Erhardt for a 20-yard gain and a crucial first down. Senior wide receiver Matt Wells scored both of Montana's touchdowns (24, 1). Montana set playoff records (at the time) with 125 first downs, 137 pass completions, 197 pass

attempts, and 1,703 passing yards.

### 1993-1994: A PROGRAM ON THE RISE

The host Griz squeaked by Northern Iowa 23-20 in a 1994 first-round contest, and then edged visiting McNeese State 30-28 in a snow storm on a 37-yard field goal by Larson with eight seconds left to play. Unfortunately, Dickenson was re-injured early in the McNeese win, and he was not able to play in the semifinal — a 28-9 loss to host (and eventual national champion) Youngstown State, which was also coached by Tressel.

In 1993, Montana rolled to a 10-1 regular-season record, with its only blemish a 35-30 loss at Oregon. After the loss to the Ducks, the Griz reeled off nine straight wins and won their first league title since 1982. The season ended in a 49-48 first-round shoot-out loss to visiting Delaware, as the Blue Hens scored with 55 seconds left to play. The Grizzlies' 93 victories in the 1990's were the second most in I-AA (Youngstown State won 103).

### 1989: GRIZ HOST PLAYOFF GAMES FOR FIRST TIME

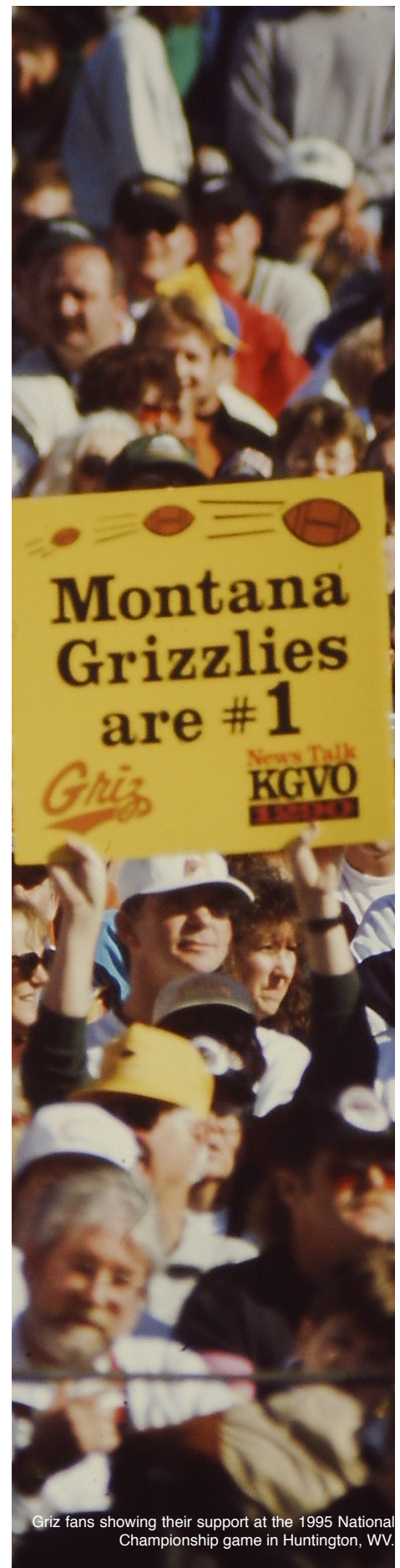
Montana hosted and won its first playoff game in school history, beating Jackson State 48-7 in the first round. The Grizzlies defeated visiting Eastern Illinois 25-15 in the quarterfinals, and then lost 45-15 to eventual national champion Georgia Southern in Statesboro in the semis.

### FIRST TWO PLAYOFF BERTHS: 1988 & 1982

After a six-year hiatus, in 1988, the Griz earned their first at-large bid into the playoffs, losing on the road 38-19 to fellow Big Sky member Idaho. Montana's initial trip to the playoffs was in 1982, when it won its first Big Sky title since the 1970 season. Despite winning the league championship the Grizzlies had to travel to Moscow, Idaho, losing 21-7 to the Vandals.

### 1969-1970: MONTANA PLAYS FOR A PAIR OF COLLEGE DIVISION TITLES

Montana played for the College Division national championship in 1969 and 1970. The Griz went undefeated and untied for the first time in school history at 10-0 and won their first-ever Big Sky title in 1969. Both years Montana advanced to the Camellia Bowl in Sacramento, Calif., but, missing many starters because of NCAA's rules on junior college transfers, the under-manned Griz lost 30-3 to top-ranked North Dakota State in 1969 and 31-16 to the same team a year later.



Griz fans showing their support at the 1995 National Championship game in Huntington, WV.