



BIG SKY CONFERENCE
2491 WASHINGTON BLVD, SUITE 201
OGDEN, UT, 84401

CONTACT: JON KASPER
ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER/MEDIA RELATIONS
801.392.1978 x-16
JKASPER@BIGSKYCONFERENCE.ORG



FACEBOOK.COM/BIGSKYCONF



TWITTER.COM/BIGSKYCONF

MONTANA STATE TOPS PRESEASON POLLS

PARK CITY, Utah (July 16, 2013) - Montana State has shared three straight Big Sky Conference football championships. If the coaches and media are correct, the Bobcats will extend that streak to four.

Montana State was selected first in the 2013 media and coaches' preseason polls, which were released Tuesday at the Big Sky Conference Summer Kickoff.

The Bobcats earned 31 first-place votes and 596 total points in the media poll. In the coaches' poll, Montana State received eight first-place votes and 140 points.

Montana State has finished 7-1 in conference each of the past three seasons under Rob Ash, advancing to the playoffs each season.

The Bobcats return senior All-American quarterback DeNarius McGhee, along with senior running back Cody Kirk and senior wide receiver Tanner Bleskin. The defense will be led by senior defensive end Brad Daly. The four players were all named to the Big Sky Preseason All-Conference Team, which was released on Monday.

Montana State has advanced to the FCS quarterfinals each of the past two seasons, losing to eventual national runner-up Sam Houston State both campaigns.

The top 10 spots in both polls were exactly the same.

Eastern Washington, which shared the 2012 championship with Montana State and Cal Poly, was tabbed second. Beau Baldwin's Eagles earned 12 first-place votes from the media and 566 total points.

The 2010 FCS Division I National Champions earned three first-place votes from the coaches, and 130 total points. EWU advanced to the national semifinals in 2012. The Eagles' defense will be led by returning All-Conference linebacker Ronnie Hamlin and returning All-Conference cornerback T.J. Lee III. Sophomore Vernon Adams, who threw six touchdown passes in the national semifinal loss to Sam Houston State, enters his first season as the full-time starting quarterback.

2013 Preseason Football Polls

Media Poll

1. Montana State (31).....	596
2. Eastern Washington (12)	566
3. Montana (3).....	492
4. Cal Poly (1).....	466
5. Northern Arizona.....	457
6. Sacramento St. (1).....	374
7. North Dakota	309
8. Northern Colorado	239
9. Southern Utah	228
10. Portland State	212
11. UC Davis	191
12. Weber State	164
13. Idaho State	74

Coaches' Poll

1. Montana State (8)	140
2. Eastern Washington (3)	130
3. Montana (2).....	111
4. Cal Poly	109
5. Northern Arizona.....	104
6. Sacramento State.....	88
7. North Dakota.....	66
8. Northern Colorado	63
9. Southern Utah	57
10. Portland State	49
11. Weber State	48
12. UC Davis	37
13. Idaho State	12

First-place votes in parentheses. Coaches were not allowed to vote for their own teams.

Despite a 5-6 campaign in 2012, Montana was picked third by the coaches and media. Montana, which has advanced to the postseason in 18 of the past 20 years, earned three first-place votes from the media and two from the coaches. The Grizzlies earned 492 total points from the media and 111 from the coaches.

Mick Delaney's Grizzlies will be bolstered by the return of junior quarterback Jordan Johnson, who sat out last season. In 2011, Johnson guided the Grizzlies to the national semifinals. Montana is slated to return 10 defensive starters, including All-American linebacker Jordan Tripp and All-Conference defensive end Zack Wagenmann.

Cal Poly enters its second season as an affiliate member, and is once again expected to challenge for the regular-season title. The Mustangs earned one first-place vote and 466 points from the media, while garnering 109 total points from the coaches. Cal Poly finished 7-1 in the league last season, earning an at-large bid to the playoffs.

Tim Walsh's Mustangs must replace quarterback Andre Broadous and All-Conference running back Deonte Williams, the league's top rusher in 2012. Cal Poly set a Big Sky single-season team rushing record in 2012.

Northern Arizona, which finished 8-3 last season, was tabbed fifth in both polls, followed by Sacramento State, North Dakota, Northern Colorado, Southern Utah and Portland State.

The Lumberjacks return senior All-American running back Zach Bauman, as well as All-Conference safety Lucky Dozier and All-Conference cornerback Anders Battle.

Sacramento State was picked sixth in both polls. The Hornets earned one first-place vote from the media. Sacramento State has notched victories over Pac-12 teams each of the past two seasons.

North Dakota was tabbed seventh, followed by Northern Colorado, Southern Utah and Portland State.

Northern Colorado is coming off its best season since joining the Big Sky in 2006. The Bears closed 2012 by winning their final three, and four of their final five. Quarterback Seth Lobato returns to lead the offense, while linebacker Clarence Bumpas is back on defense.

Weber State was selected 11th in the coaches' poll, and 12th in the media poll. UC Davis, under the direction of first-year coach Ron Gould, was tabbed 11th by the media and 12th by the coaches.

Idaho State was selected 13th in both polls.

The 2013 season begins on Thursday, Aug. 29.

The FCS playoff field expands from 20 to 24 teams this season. First-round playoff games begin on Saturday, Nov. 30. This year, the top eight teams will be seeded and receive first-round byes. The first-round will consist of 14 teams and seven games.

The second round games are Saturday, Sept. 7. Quarterfinals will be played Dec. 13-14, with the semifinals on Dec. 20-21. The Division I FCS National Championship game is scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 4 at 2 p.m. Eastern in Frisco, Texas.