

BIG SKY ANNOUNCES ALL-CONFERENCE FOOTBALL TEAM



OGDEN, Utah (Nov. 19, 2007) - The Big Sky Conference has announced the 2007 All-Conference football team along with Offensive Player of the Year, Defensive Player of the Year, and Newcomer of the Year. The teams and awards were selected by the league's nine head coaches.

Montana senior defensive end Kroy Biermann, a leading candidate for the Buck Buchanan Award, was named the Defensive Player of the Year. Eastern Washington quarterback Matt Nichols was tabbed the Offensive Player of the Year. Weber State freshman quarterback Cameron Higgins was selected as the Newcomer of the Year.

Big Sky regular-season champion Montana led the way with seven players selected to the first team. Biermann, a 6-foot-3, 238-pounder from Hardin, Mont., was a unanimous selection at his defensive end spot. Biermann, who leads the Big Sky and ranks second in the nation with 15 sacks, was one of eight players selected to the first team for a second time.

Biermann closed the regular season with 59 total tackles, 16.5 tackles for loss, and a league-high five forced fumbles. Undefeated and second-ranked Montana leads the Big Sky in scoring defense, rushing defense and total defense. Biermann is the first Grizzly defender since Trey Young in 2002 to claim the honor.

The Grizzlies meet Wofford in the first round of the Division I Football Championship on Saturday.

Nichols, a 6-2, 220-pounder from Cottonwood Calif., helped Eastern Washington finish 6-2 in the Big Sky and 8-3 overall, securing an at-large bid to the playoffs. Nichols completed 62.7 percent of his passes in the regular season for 3,125 yards with 30 touchdowns and just six interceptions. He's averaging a league-best 312.5 yards of total offense per game, and a league-best 284.1 passing yards per game. His 312.5 yards of total offense rank fifth in the nation. His efficiency rating of 161.4 is seventh-best in the FCS. Eastern Washington finished the regular season leading the Big Sky in scoring offense and total offense. EWU takes on McNeese State in a first-round playoff game on Saturday.

Higgins, a 6-2, 190-pound redshirt freshman from Honolulu, Hawai'i, started six of Weber State's final seven games, helping the Wildcats to a 5-2 record down the stretch. Higgins completed 56.2 percent of his passes for 1,959 yards with 17 touchdowns and nine interceptions. He averaged 178.1 yards of total offense per game. Higgins accounted for seven touchdowns in Weber State's historic 73-68 win over Portland State, the highest scoring game in NCAA history.

Weber State senior offensive tackle David Hale, Portland State senior center Brennan Carvalho, Idaho State senior running back Josh Barnett, Weber State sophomore running back Trevyn Smith and Wildcat junior return specialist Bryant Eteuati were repeat first-team picks on offense. Biermann and Montana safety Colt Anderson were the repeat picks on defense. Eastern Washington offensive guard Matt Alfred, a first-team pick in 2005, returned to the first team in 2007. Biermann, Eteuati, and Carvalho were unanimous first-team picks.

Other Montana players tabbed to the first team were: Guard J.D. Quinn, tackle Brent Russum, linebacker Loren Utterback, punter Tyson Johnson, and kicker Dan Carpenter.

Carpenter, a senior from Helena, Mont., broke the FCS record for points by a kicker last Saturday. Carpenter enters the playoffs with 403 career points. He also has 72 career field goals, which is tied for the FCS record.

Weber State played six players on the first team. Joining Eteuati, Smith and Hale were fullback Marcus Mailei, defensive tackle Bryce Scanlon and safety Ty Sparrow.

Junior defensive end Greg Beach joined Nichols, Alfred and sophomore wide receiver Aaron Boyce as Eastern Washington first-teamers. Boyce hauled in 75 catches for 1,230 yards with nine touchdowns.

Boyce's wide receiving mates on the first team also put up big numbers. Portland State senior Tremayne Kirkland led the Big Sky with 84 catches for 1,059 yards and 10 touchdowns. Idaho State junior Eddie Thompson caught 83 passes for 907 yards and six touchdowns.

Northern Arizona and Sacramento State both placed three players on the first team. Northern Arizona cornerbacks KJ Gerard, who led the Big Sky with six interceptions, and Ricky Wilson were tabbed first team, along with special teamer Cyrus Igonu, who blocked a league-high four kicks.

Sacramento State defensive tackle Dallas Mauga, outside linebacker Mike Brannon, and inside linebacker Cyrus Mulitalo were first-team picks.

Northern Colorado and Montana State each placed one player on the first team. Junior linebacker Bobby Daly, who led the Big Sky with 135 tackles and is a candidate for the Buck Buchanan Award, was the Bobcats' first-teamer. Tight end Ryan Chelsa, who caught 37 passes for 444 yards with four touchdowns, is the first Northern Colorado player to earn first-team honors in the Big Sky.

AWARD WINNERS

Offensive Player of the Year
Defensive Player of the Year
Newcomer of the Year

Matt Nichols, QB, Eastern Washington
Kroy Biermann, DE, Montana
Cameron Higgins, QB, Weber State

FIRST TEAM OFFENSE

Wide Receivers	Aaron Boyce, Sophomore, Eastern Washington Eddie Thompson, Junior, Idaho State Tremayne Kirkland, Senior, Portland State
Tackles	*David Hale, Senior, Weber State Brent Russum, Junior, Montana
Guards	*Matt Alfred, Senior, Eastern Washington J.D. Quinn, Junior, Montana
Center	*#Brennan Carvalho, Senior, Portland State
Tight End	Ryan Chesla, Junior, Northern Colorado
Quarterback	Matt Nichols, Sophomore, Eastern Washington
Running Backs	*Josh Barnett, Senior, Idaho State *Trevyn Smith, Sophomore, Weber State
Fullback	Marcus Mailei, Junior, Weber State
Place kicker	Dan Carpenter, Senior, Montana
Return Specialist	*#Bryant Eteuati, Junior, Weber State

FIRST TEAM DEFENSE

Tackles	Dallas Mauga, Senior, Sacramento State Bryce Scanlon, Junior, Weber State
Ends	*#Kroy Biermann, Senior, Montana Greg Peach, Junior, Eastern Washington
Outside Linebackers	Loren Utterback, Senior, Montana Mike Brannon, Senior, Sacramento State
Inside Linebackers	Bobby Daly, Junior, Montana State Cyrus Mulitalo, Senior, Sacramento State
Cornerbacks	K.J. Gerard, Junior, Northern Arizona Ricky Wilson, Senior, Northern Arizona
Safeties	*Colt Anderson, Junior, Montana Ty Sparrow, Senior, Weber State
Punter	Tyson Johnson, Senior, Montana

FIRST TEAM SPECIAL TEAMS PLAYER

Special Teams	Cyrus Igono, Junior, Northern Arizona
---------------	---------------------------------------

SECOND TEAM OFFENSE

Wide Receivers	Ryan Bagley, Senior, Montana Alex Watson, Senior, Northern Arizona Bryant Eteuati, Junior, Weber State
Tackles	Zach Wasielewski, Senior, Eastern Washington Daren Heerspink, Senior, Portland State
Guards	Jeff Hansen, Sophomore, Montana State Dimitri Tsoumpas, Senior, Weber State
Center	Colin Dow, Junior, Montana
Tight end	Shaun Fitzpatrick, Junior, Northern Arizona
Quarterback	Cole Bergquist, Junior, Montana
Running backs	Lex Hilliard, Senior, Montana Demetrius Crawford, Junior, Montana State
Fullback	Olaniyi Sobomehin, Senior, Portland State
Place kicker	Robbie Dehaze, Junior, Northern Arizona
Return Specialist	JD Ponciano, Sophomore, Idaho State

SECOND TEAM DEFENSE

Tackles	Lance Witherspoon, Junior, Eastern Washington Craig Mettler, Junior, Montana Aaron Papich, Senior, Montana State
Ends	Cole Smith, Senior, Portland State Dane Fletcher, Sophomore, Montana State
Outside Linebackers	Epikopo King, Senior, Montana State J.D. Folsom, Junior, Weber State
Inside Linebackers	Tyler Joyce, Senior, Montana Cristian Sarmiento, Junior, Northern Colorado
Cornerbacks	Chris Clark, Senior, Montana Michael Beach, Senior, Montana State
Safeties	Torrey Thomas, Senior, Montana Brian Jarrett, Senior, Eastern Washington
Punter	Dan Zeidman, Senior, Idaho State

SECOND TEAM SPECIAL TEAMS PLAYER

Special Teams	Bryant Eteuati, Junior, Weber State
---------------	-------------------------------------

#Unanimous Selection

*Two-Time Selection

HONORABLE MENTION OFFENSE

Wide Receivers - Brynson Brown, Eastern Washington; Jaron Taylor, Idaho State; Clyde Logan, Idaho State; Eric Allen, Montana; Mike Ferriter, Montana; Kenneth Mackins, Portland State; Ryan Coogler, Sacramento State; Tony Washington, Sacramento State; Tim Toone, Weber State.

Tackles - Rocky Hanni, Senior, Eastern Washington; Evan Dietrich-Smith, Idaho State; Cody Balogh, Montana; Peder Jensen, Montana State; Nick Posey, Northern Arizona; Ryne Holstrom, Northern Arizona; Ray Navar, Sacramento State.

Guards - Chris Carlsen, Eastern Washington; Bryce Metcalf, Idaho State; Dan Carter, Montana; Tim Reader, Northern Arizona; Matt Lemley, Sacramento State.

Center - George Yarno, Idaho State; Jon Toailoa, Northern Arizona; Jake Gable, Northern Colorado; Kyle Leitzke, Sacramento State; Kyle Mutcher, Weber State.

Tight end - Tom McAndrews, Eastern Washington; Trevor Messersmith, Idaho State; Dan Beaudin, Montana; Steven Pfahler, Montana; Elliott Barhart, Montana State; Brandon Bostick, Montana State; Clint Wright, Northern Colorado.

Quarterback - Lance Kriesien, Northern Arizona; Cameron Higgins, Weber State.

Running Back - Dale Morris, Eastern Washington; Lionel Scott, Northern Arizona; Alex Henderson, Northern Arizona; Bryan Hillard, Sacramento State.

Fullback - Kevin Klaboe, Montana.

Placekicker - Juan Gamboa, Sacramento State.

Return Specialist - Jody Johnson, Sacramento State; Mark Mariani, Montana.

HONORABLE MENTION DEFENSE

Tackles - Shawn Powell, Eastern Washington; Villiami Akoteau, Idaho State; Kelly Kain, Montana; Philip Humphrey, Portland State; Derek Johnson, Weber State.

Ends - Jason Belford, Eastern Washington; Geo Simmons, Idaho State; Mike Stadnyk, Montana; Blair Boynton, Northern Arizona; Drew Hoffman, Northern Arizona; John Eddy, Northern Colorado; Casey Tyler, Portland State; Blaine Jackson, Sacramento State; Kevin Linehan, Weber State.

Outside Linebackers - Anthony Dotson, Eastern Washington; Sterling Mennear, Idaho State; Brad Rife, Idaho State; Muckie Foreman, Montana; Joe Kenney, Northern Colorado; K.J. McCrae, Portland State; Ryan Pederson, Portland State; Mike Hickman, Sacramento State; Brad Stewart, Weber State.

Inside Linebackers - Makai Borden, Eastern Washington; Jared Kuhl, Eastern Washington; Ryan Phipps, Idaho State; Kyle Ryan, Montana; Cody Dowd, Northern Arizona; Jordan Senn, Portland State; Andy Schantz, Portland State.

Cornerbacks - Ira Jarmon, Eastern Washington; D.J. Clark, Idaho State; Quinton Jackson, Montana; Kory Austin, Montana State; Brandin Williams, Weber State.

Safeties - Terrance Calloway, Idaho State; Kevin Retoriano, Montana State; Cyrus Igonu, Northern Arizona; Josh Luck, Northern Arizona; D.J. Craft, Northern Colorado; Micheal Dorsey, Portland State; Brett Shelton, Sacramento State; Brent Webber, Sacramento State.

Punter - Robbie Dehaze, Northern Arizona; Mike Snoy, Weber State.

HONORABLE MENTION SPECIAL TEAMS

Special Teams - Adam Macomber, Eastern Washington; Clint Knickrehm, Idaho State; Brandon Dwyer, Montana; Ryan Lutz, Northern Colorado; Logan Dose, Portland State.

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

Offensive Player of the Year

Matt Nichols, QB, Eastern Washington

Defensive Player of the Year

Kroy Biermann, DE, Montana

Newcomer of the Year

Cameron Higgins, QB, Weber State