Football (National Ranking: 22/20)

Cal Poly to Host No. 1-Ranked Montana on Saturday Night

WEEKLY RELEASE (pdf)

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The contest will be broadcast live on ESPN Radio (1280 am) and KCPR Radio (91.3 fm) with Tom Barket providing the play-by-play and Joe Harper adding color commentary. Links for audio and video streams of the game as well as GameCast are available on www.GoPoly.com.

The Mustangs are receiving votes in both the FCS coaches poll and Sports Network media poll. With Villanova's 31-24 loss to Temple, Montana climbed to No. 1 in both polls this week.

Last Saturday, Cal Poly erased a 17-7 halftime deficit with two touchdowns and a safety in the second half en route to a 23-7 victory over Humboldt State. The Mustangs, who surrendered 195 total yards in the first half, held the visiting Lumberjacks off the scoreboard in the second half and just 57 total yards and two first downs. Slotback Mark Rodgers surpassed the 100-yard mark in his first game as a Mustang with 105 yards on 14 trips. He also caught two passes and scored twice -- on a four-yard run and a seven-yard reception. Cal Poly, held to five first downs and 107 total yards in the first half, accumulated 13 first downs and 237 yards after intermission, outscoring the Lumberjacks 16-0.

Montana opened its 2010 season with a 73-2 win over Western State (Colo.) at home as quarterbacks Andrew Selle and Justin Roper combined for five touchdown passes and the defense returned four interceptions for scores, tying an NCAA single-game record. Overall, the Griz defense allowed only 73 yards on 51 plays.

At fall camp, second-year Mustang head coach Tim Walsh welcomed back 59 lettermen, including 11 players who started at least five games on offense and eight more on defense. Three of the returnees this fall were first-team All-Great West Conference selections in 2009 -- junior fullback Jake Romanelli, senior defensive tackle James Chen and junior cornerback Asa Jackson.

The passing combination of quarterback Tony Smith and wide receiver Dominique Johnson also returns. Smith completed 112 of 219 passes for 1,618 yards and 15 touchdowns while Johnson, the transfer from UCLA, was the top Mustang receiver with 43 catches for 741 yards and six scores. Romanelli and senior fullback Jordan Yocum both rushed for over 450 yards in 2009 and

the entire Mustang offensive line returns as well.

Senior linebacker Marty Mohamed, the team's the top tackler with 93 a year ago, and senior cornerback Scottie Cordier, whose four interceptions were the most on the squad in 2009, anchor the defense along with Chen and two-time first-team All-Great West honoree Jackson.

Montana, coached by Robin Pflugrad (first season at Montana (1-0), Portland State '80), returns 46 lettermen, including 12 starters, off last year's team which went 14-1, won the Big Sky Conference title and finished second to Villanova in the NCAA FCS playoffs.

Top Griz returnees are running back Chase Reynolds (321 carries, 1,502 yards, 22 TDs in 2009), Selle (224 of 356 for 3,043 yards, 28 TDs in 2009), cornerback Trumaine Johnson (five interceptions, 12 pass deflections in 2009), kicker Brody McKnight (64 of 67 PATs, 15 of 25 FG in 2009) and punter Sean Wren (41.2 average, 17 inside the 20 in 2009).

Montana has appeared in the NCAA playoffs 17 consecutive years, reaching the title game seven times and capturing national titles in 1995 and 2001. The Griz, national runners-up each of the last two years, have been ranked in the Sports Network's media poll for 165 straight weeks and have finished atop the Big Sky 15 of the last 17 seasons.

The Mustangs and Grizzlies are meeting for the 15th time and Cal Poly has won just one previous contest, 35-21, in the first round of the 2005 NCAA FCS playoffs. Montana won a year ago 35-23 at Washington-Grizzly Stadium, overcoming early 10-0 and 17-7 deficits. Yocum rushed for 119 yards on 24 carries while Mohamed notched 10 tackles. The Griz won 30-28 two years ago in Alex G. Spanos Stadium. The Mustangs led 21-14 at halftime but missed a 27-yard field goal attempt with 38 seconds remaining that would have won the game.

The Mustangs have captured three Great West Conference titles in the last six years (2004, 2005, 2008) and earned NCAA Division I Football Championship Subdivision playoff berths in both 2005 and 2008. Cal Poly has won 53 of its last 81 games dating back to the 2002 season finale and has won 18 of its last 36 games on the road and 35 of its last 42 home contests.

Next week, Cal Poly embarks on a five-week road trip, beginning Sept. 18 at Texas State. The Mustangs also visit McNeese State, Fresno State, Old Dominion and Southern Utah before returning home to host North Dakota (Hall of Fame Game) on Oct. 23 at 6:05 p.m.

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