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Sports

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Prep griders hit the field

By COLTER NUANEZ
for the Missoulian

If you didn't know better, you'd think it was October as fall camp opened for all three Class AA football programs in Missoula on Friday.

Absent is the summer heat and the smoke of fire season. Present is an exuberance surrounding all three programs, all of which have different questions to answer. Aside from the sporadic nature of the season's first practice and the lack of pads, the temperature was reminiscent of postseason preparation rather than the double-day opener.

"The last two weeks before this I was kind of upset because I couldn't hang out outside with my family, but as far as football is concerned, it's a great thing," said Sentinel head man Pete Joseph. "When it is like this, the kids'



MICHAEL GALLACHER/Missoulian

Missoula Big Sky head football coach Gary Ekegren talks to his sophomores, juniors and seniors before their first day of practice Friday afternoon. Ekegren begins his 20th year as Big Sky's head football coach and his 45th year of coaching.

mental focus is just better. We want to put them through some adversity, so maybe it will warm up next week, but this is nice."

An improvement in mental focus and a dedication to all things Spartan football have been trademarks since Joseph

took over at Sentinel in 2005. This year's team looks to improve on a squad that posted a 5-5 record and narrowly missed the playoffs last season.

If summer numbers are any indication, improvement seems inevitable. Joseph said anywhere between 75 and 100 players came to weight lifting sessions each morning. A group of 73 upper classmen (sophomores through seniors) reported to camp Friday and about 60 players will dress for varsity home games, both program highs in recent memory.

Across town, longtime Missoula Big Sky coach Gary Ekegren will again have a senior-laden squad as 22 dot the Eagles' roster. He said he will dress about 50 of the 80 kids who attended the opening of

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Osprey snap out of skid

By MICHAEL HEINBACH
of the Missoulian

The Missoula Osprey weren't going to let a previously undefeated opposing pitcher or a sloppy defensive effort in the top of the first inning Friday night get in the way of snapping their four-game losing streak.

After allowing a run in the top of the first, the Osprey hit three home runs and scored four times in the bottom half of the opening frame off Ogden Raptors starting

pitcher Edwin Contreras and held on for a 6-4 Pioneer League victory before 1,543 fans at Ogden-Allegiance Park.

Two singles and a throwing error by Osprey catcher Jae Yun Kim gave the visitors a 1-0 lead before Missoula took its first whacks against Contreras,



Osprey 6, Raptors 4

Saturday
Ogden (Vasquez 2-3) at Missoula (Smith 0-2)
Ogden-Allegiance Park
7:05 p.m.
Radio: KMPT 930 AM

who entered with a 4-0 record and a 2.70 ERA.

But O's second baseman David Nick sent Contreras' first pitch of the evening over the fence in left-center field and center fielder Keon Broxton and shortstop David Narodowski belted back-to-back two-out homers in the inning to help Missoula take control early and break its four-game skid.

"Most of the time, they like to throw a fastball right down the middle, thinking you're going to take it," said Nick of his leadoff long ball. "So I thought I'd air one out and see what happened. I got a good piece of it and it went out."

The win lifted the Osprey to 6-5 in the season's second half. They remained tied for first place in the league's North Division with the Great Falls

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PGA CHAMPIONSHIP

Woods takes control

By DOUG FERGUSON
Associated Press

CHASKA, Minn. - Tiger Woods watched the last of his three straight birdies take one last turn and drop into the cup. Walking toward the hole, he nodded his head and dangled his tongue out of the side of his mouth, a swagger that spoke volumes.

He is on top of his game at the PGA Championship, and he knows it.

In blustery conditions and on bumpy greens, Woods made key par putts early in his round and big birdies toward the end for a 2-under 70 that gave him a four-shot lead in the final major of the year.

The late string of birdies came in the final hour Friday at Hazeltine, and it changed everything. The final birdie putt gave this major that look of inevitability, with some frightening figures to back it up.

Woods is 8-0 in the majors when leading after 36 holes. He has never lost any tournament when leading by four shots going into the weekend. Of the top 16 players going into the second round, he was the only player to break par.

"In order to have a lead in a

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MISSOULA STAMPEDE

Locals cowboy up

Polson's Dark only bull rider to post a score

By BILL SPELTZ
of the Missoulian

On a night when the dirt was heavy and the air crisp, world champion status didn't mean much at the Missoula Stampede Rodeo.

Six-time world champion Trevor Brazile, one of the most accomplished cowboys to ever grace Alltel Arena, failed to post a time in tie-down and team roping. Jesse Kruse of Great Falls, who leads the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) world standings in saddle bronc riding, settled for a disappointing mark of 77.

But a pair of young rough stock riders from Montana seemed to know just what to do in front of a loud near-capacity crowd. Polson grad Scott Dark and longtime travel partner Tyrell James Smith of Vaughn posted marks they hope will hold up through Day Two of the Stampede on Saturday.

Dark, 21, owns the distinction of being the only bull rider in 13 to reach the whistle Friday. He posted a score of 72.

"It's been a long time coming," said Dark, who brought back an Australian accent from a two-year church mission he finished in the spring. "It's been a pretty slow summer."

"I traveled to Glasgow last week with (Smith) and his dad (former NFR saddle bronc rider John E.S. Smith). I was talking to John afterwards and he was giving me some pointers. I'm trying to keep my elbow in closer and keep control of my free arm and stick my

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MICHAEL GALLACHER/Missoulian

Telkwa, British Columbia, cowboy Logan Hodson gets some serious air on the back of Starlite on Friday evening during the bareback competition at the Missoula Stampede. Hodson scored a 69.

Vick gets mixed reception from Philly fans

By RON TODT
Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA - Michael Vick's return to the NFL with the Eagles is getting a mixed reaction in Philadelphia.

Some hardcore Philly fans who bleed Eagles' green were seeing red Friday, a day after the team signed the former Atlanta Falcons quarterback to a two-year deal.

Meanwhile, others credited the franchise for giving Vick a second chance after he was convicted for his role in running a dogfighting ring and served 18 months of a 23-month sentence in federal prison.

Opinions of those around Philadelphia were as diverse as

Eagles fans themselves.

Because of the Vick signing, Maryanne Aros said her Eagles tickets will go begging this year.

"I'm a die-hard Eagles fan, I was born and raised following the Birds, I have pictures of myself, 3 years old, in an Eagles uniform, it's the way I bond with my father - but I can't," said the 23-year-old who was dressed in red Phillies garb as she protested outside the Eagles' practice facility following Vick's introductory news conference.

"I can't go to the games, I can't watch anymore," said Aros, who was holding a sign showing pictures of dogfights and asking "Why do (Eagles

CEO) Jeffrey Laurie and (president) Joe Banner condone this?"

But a few steps away 33-year-old Christopher Cabrera, of Merchantville, N.J., had outfitted his 4-year-old pit bull Tyson with a makeshift Vick jersey.

"I'm in favor of him getting another chance," Cabrera said. "What he did was wrong, but everybody deserves a second chance in America. And if everybody was persecuted for the skeletons we don't know in their closets, everyone would hate everybody, and that's not the way you've got to be."

Throughout the city, Philadelphia area residents

debated the surprise signing of Vick.

"I think he should be in jail," said 26-year-old David Owens, who was strolling through tony Rittenhouse Square with 5-year-old Shiloh, a German Shepherd/Labrador mix. "I think he needs psychiatric help; I think it's an illness. But he shouldn't be playing sports."

But 55-year-old artist Rich Bedenbaugh, walking a 2-year-old Shih Tzu in another part of the park, was more forgiving.

"He served time but he seems like he's really sorry," Bedenbaugh said. "He's a good player. He might take us to the Super Bowl."

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