

Duquesne excited for College Basketball Invitational

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By Bill Brink, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

It's tough enough to travel more than 2,000 miles to Missoula, Mont., for postseason play, let alone face a team that was six points away from an NCAA tournament bid.

Such is Duquesne's task when it travels to face Montana at 9:05 p.m. today in the first round of the College Basketball Invitational.

"I was really excited for our team and our program," Dukes coach Ron Everhart said. "I was really excited for our young kids."

The Grizzlies (21-10) present a difficult, but familiar, problem to the Dukes. Senior center Brian Qvale, a 6-foot-11 first-team all-Big Sky Conference selection and the league defensive player of the year, averages 14 points per game and has blocked 92 shots this season. The Dukes have faced big players similar to him, such as St. Bonaventure's Andrew Nicholson, Everhart said, and will guard Qvale much the same way. Sophomore guard Will Cherry and junior forward Derek Selvig average 14 and 10 points respectively, and Cherry averages 4.2 assists per game for Montana.

The Grizzlies lost to Northern Colorado, 65-60, March 9 in the Big Sky championship game. Northern Colorado earned a No. 15 seed in the NCAA tournament.

The Dukes (18-12) lost seven of their final nine games and lost their first game in the Atlantic 10 tournament, a 93-90 overtime defeat Friday to Saint Joseph's.

"Interesting thing about it is everybody's talking about what a disaster it was in the conference tournament and all that," Everhart said. "The fact is I thought we played pretty good. I just thought St. Joe's played great."

Everhart said the team was excited to make this trip.

"We've got a lot of young kids," he said. "They just want to play."

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Today

Game: Duquesne (18-12) at Montana (21-10), 9:05 p.m. today, Dahlberg Arena, Missoula, Mont.

Radio, Internet: WPGB-FM (104.7), GoDuquesne.com.

Duquesne: Coming off a 93-90 loss to Saint Joseph's in overtime Friday in second round of the Atlantic 10 tournament. ... Freshman G **T.J. McConnell** set conference freshman record for steals in a season, passing Temple's **Pepe Sanchez**. ... This is the first matchup between the two teams. ... Duquesne has not won a post-conference tournament game since 1994.

Montana: Coming off a 65-60 loss to Northern Colorado in Big Sky championship game. ... Senior C and first-team All-Big Sky selection **Brian Qvale** leads team in scoring (14.3 points per game) and rebounding (8.4 per game). ... Grizzlies rank 14th in Division I in scoring defense, allowing 60.1 points per game.

Of note: Dukes coach **Ron Everhart** is seeking his first post-conference tournament win of career.
