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Montana Mile Kicks Off State Games

The 2024 Montana Mile, sponsored by Billings West End Walmart, marks the 33rd race for men and the 25th race for women. The race is one of the most anticipated events of the Big Sky State Games Opening Ceremonies and is scheduled at approximately 8:15-8:30 p.m. Friday, July 19. The Montana Mile is an invitational race featuring some of the state's fastest high school, college, and post-collegiate milers.

Ase Ackerman

Ase Ackerman just finished a successful collegiate athletic career at Montana State University-Billings, competing in both track and field and cross country. The former Dawson County High School runner was named a team captain for the Yellowjackets, receiving GNAC All-Conference in 3000 steeplechase and 1500 and holding the 8K and 1500 school records. Ase will be coming off a second-place finish in last year's Montana Mile and this will be his sixth year competing in the Montana Mile.



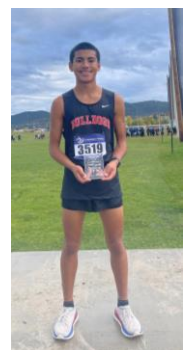
Henry Ballinger

Henry Ballinger will be going into his sophomore year at the University of Montana where he competes on the cross country and track and field teams. Henry graduated from Helena High School with school records in the 800 and 1600, and placements at the State AA meet in the 400, 800, and 1600. This will be Henry's first time competing in the Montana Mile.



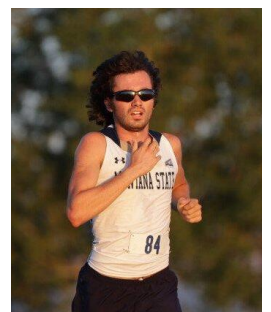
Ben Bird

Ben Bird will be a sophomore in the fall at Hardin High School. During his freshman year, Ben won State in the 1600 and he placed second in the 3200. This will be Ben's first year competing in the Montana Mile.



Riley Collins

Riley Collins graduated from Montana State University in 2023 and he was a member of the track and field team. Riley went to high school at Bozeman High. He competed in the Big Sky Conference Championship and during the meet, he was a point scorer in the 1600. This will be Riley's sixth time competing in the Montana Mile.



Chase Drange

Participating in his first Montana Mile, Chase Drange is now exiting his senior year at Tiffin University in Ohio. Chase graduated high school from Custer County in Miles City. Chase was a scoring member of the Tiffin cross country and track and field team, marking a lifetime best last year in the 1500 with a time of 4:06.42. This will be his first time competing in the Montana Mile.



Shane Ketchum

Shane will be attending Montana State Billings in the fall as a junior after taking a break in academics to join the army. Shane previously ran for Rocky Mountain College where he was a first team NAIA selection in the 4x800. Shane also attended NAIA nationals during his time at Rocky. He has more recently won the Bridger Spartan Race and the Bob Marshall 25K. This will be Shane's first time competing in the Montana Mile.



Grey Pisen

Greyson Pisen attends Billings Central Catholic High School and will be a junior this fall. He holds school records for the 5K, 1600, and 3200. He also placed third at the State A Championship in cross country, second in the 1600 and third in the 3200 in track. This will be Greyson's second time participating in the Montana Mile.



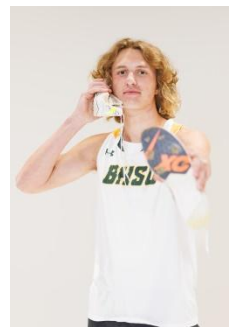
Carson Steckelberg

This fall, Carson Steckelberg will be entering his sophomore year at University of Montana. Carson runs and competes for the University of Montana cross country and track and field teams. He currently holds the school records at Gallatin High School for the 800, 1600, 3200, and 5K in cross country. Carson was a three-time All-State for cross country and two-time All-State for track. He will be running in the Montana Mile for the fourth consecutive year.



Jaxon Straus

Jaxon Straus will be a sophomore at Black Hills State University this fall. He studies business and economics, and he runs on the cross country team. He was named All-State three times in cross country during his high school career at Billings West High. Jaxon has had multiple top-five finishes in the Midland Roundtable Top Ten Track Meet. This will be Jaxon's third time participating in the Montana Mile.



Peyton Summers to

Peyton Summers graduated from Wolf Point High School this last spring and will be attending Dawson Community College in the fall. In his senior year, Peyton won state in the 1600 and the 3200. He also placed 3rd in the 800. This will be Peyton's first year competing in the Montana Mile.



Women's Field

Karis Brightwings-Pease

Karis Brightwings-Pease competed in high school cross country and track last season as a freshman. She will be a sophomore this fall at Hardin High School. She has already accomplished a lot in that short time, including setting high school records and winning titles in the State A cross country championships as well as State A track championships in the 1600M and 3200M. This will be her second time competing in the Montana Mile.



Hayley Burns

Hayley Burns will be a junior at Northern Arizona University this fall, and she will be participating in her third Montana Mile. Burns won the 3200 title in the Rated Section of the Arcadia Invitational in high school. She is a ten-time all-state selection in cross country and track at Bozeman High. She won the NCAA Cross Country National title in 2022.



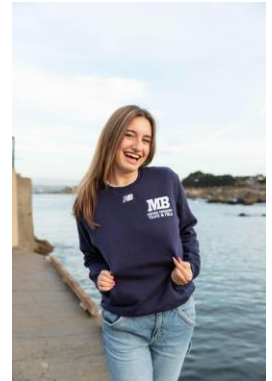
Natalie Hodgskiss

Natalie Hodgskiss will be a sophomore at Choteau High School this fall. As a freshman, she won the 1600 and placed second in the 800 at the MHSA State B track and field meet. This will be Natalie's first time competing in the Montana Mile.



Ali Keith

Ali Keith currently attends college at Cal State University Monterey Bay where she is majoring in Communication Design. She has had multiple achievements throughout her running career, including All-State cross country, NXR Northwest Open Invitational Champion 2021, and 5K record holder at Billings West. This will be her second time running in the Montana Mile.



Addison Kegel

Addison Kegel will be an 8th grader at Ben Steele Middle School in Billings. Addison won the 400, 1600, and 4x400 at the city meet this last year. She ran a 5:10 in the 1600 to qualify her for the Montana Mile. This will be Addison's first time competing in the Montana Mile and is the youngest participant.



Sydney Little Light

Sydney Little Light graduated from Rocky Mountain College in 2023, where she holds records in nearly every distance event. Little Light is the 2022 and 2023 Montana Mile champion and will be running for her fourth time. The Hardin High graduate is a seven time NAIA All-American and the 2022 NAIA 1500 Outdoor Track and Field National Champion. Sydney was also the 2022 Ultimate Warrior Champion. She was named Frontier Conference Athlete of the Week 28 times in her running career. Sydney ran for Eastern Kentucky last year while finishing her masters degree. She placed second in the Atlantic Sun Conference Championship Meet and holds the mile record at Eastern Kentucky.



Grace Timm

Grace Timm will be a senior at Rocky Mountain College this fall. Grace is a member of the Rocky Track and Field team and has been a scoring member at the Frontier Conference Championships, placing second in the 1500, third in the 5K, and third in the Steeplechase. This will be Grace's second time competing in the Montana Mile.



Natalie Wood

A 2023 graduate of Sweet Grass High School, Natalie Wood now attends Montana State University. She holds her high school records for the 1600 and 3200 and was the 2023 State B Champion in those events as well. Natalie was also a part of the



Montana State Team that won a conference title in 2024. This will be her second time running in the Montana Mile.

Odessa Zentz

Odessa Zentz graduated high school from Helena High and currently is a sophomore at Northern Arizona University. In high school, Odessa was the State AA champion in the 200, 400 and 800, and is the school record holder in the 200 and 400. She has competed in the Big Sky Championships for the last two years, and she placed seventh this past spring in the 800. This will be Odessa's fourth time competing in the Montana Mile.



The gates to Daylis Stadium open at 5:00 p.m. Admission is free. For more information, call 406-254-7426 or go to bigskygames.org.

The 2024 Montana Mile is sponsored by Billings West End Walmart. Opening Ceremonies is sponsored by Wendy's. Major Sponsors of the State Games are Kampgrounds of America (KOA), First Interstate Bank, and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Montana.