

COLUMN

# AJ versus Brody McKnight

by A.J. Mazzolini

In the second installment of **AJ Versus**, the Kaimin bounded out of the tunnel into Washington-Grizzly Stadium. Today's showdown: kicker Brody McKnight and the uprights.

I wanted my entrance to resemble the team's on Saturdays, but everything feels far less epic when there's not 25,000 screaming fans, a colossal blowup helmet and a T.I. song pumping you up. I settled for a quaint camera crew and a few straggling players as my audience.

In my head, I've always envisioned place kickers as little guys. Who needs tons of muscle to send footballs through the goal posts anyway? I figured I'd meet a guy who looked like he'd just finished math homework before donning his shoulder pads.

But that's not Brody. The junior

from Vancouver, B.C., is built like a tank, but with bigger arms. He weighs in at around 200 pounds, but bench presses 380, and honestly looks more like a linebacker than a kicker.

Looking at him, I figure the only thing he'd be kicking is my ass. An intimidating character, indeed.

But damn is he friendly. And after a rather charming introduction to the basics of field goal kicking, he lets me give it a whirl.

We start with extra points, kicked from about the 10-yard line. He demonstrates (nearly booting the sucker out of the stadium) and I try to mimic (sending a squibber far left and barely a foot off the ground).

This is going to be harder than I thought.

I decide to level the playing field; I'll kick from the 5-yard line (technically a shorter kick than this is not even possible in a real-game

scenario) and he'll be back nailing 45-yarders.

He boots his through the poles with ease, even showing off a bit and hitting one from the sidelines. Great. Thanks, Brody.

My kicks cruise off my shoe like missiles. Well, more like poorly crafted paper airplanes that crash and burn somewhere in the end zone. Repeatedly, they fail to reach the target.

"It's OK, you got this bud," Brody chimes in after about seven straight shanks.

That Brody, what a sweetheart.

On kick eight, I feel like I do have this. The ball lifts, soaring higher than any of the rest. It's straight down the middle, accurate and precise. It's going, going ... and clunks off the cross bar.



Greg Lindstrom/Montana Kaimin

watch my foot hit with ball, connect with inner foot and follow through.

The sell-out crowd (my editor, the only guy in the stands) is cheering me on, willing me to make my metaphorical game-winning field goal. The snap is on target (there was no snap), the hold is perfect (as it should be, I set it up with the tee myself) and the kick is away.

The stadium goes silent as it projects through the air. Time stands still. It's up. And it's good, clearing the bar by a whole foot!

One of 10, an unfavorable percentage for any kicker, I'm told.

"No scholarship for you," head coach Robin Pflugrad made sure to heckle at me before leaving the field.

Looks like it's back to paying for school the regular way—through selling blood and semen.

For video of *AJ Versus the Montana Soccer team*, log onto [montanakaimin.com](http://montanakaimin.com).

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9	8	1	7	2	3	5	6	4
1	9	4	3	7	2	8	5	6
8	7	6	9	5	1	4	2	3
3	5	2	8	4	6	1	7	9
7	6	8	1	3	5	9	4	2
2	3	5	4	9	7	6	8	1
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10/8/10

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