

# The Battalion Sports

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Athletic Department: decision not misleading

## Demotion puzzling to soccer teams

by John P. Lopez

Battalion Staff

The coaches and several members of the now-defunct Aggie varsity soccer teams are confused, surprised and upset over why the Texas A&M Athletic Council decided to abolish their varsity status and cut off all funding from the Athletic Department.

This move, announced Monday, precedes the scheduled start of the season by only one week.

The Athletic Department, on the other hand, said the decision was not made hastily. They said both the men's and women's soccer teams knew last spring that their varsity status would not run through this fall.

So who's right?

On Oct. 7, the men's and women's soccer squads were officially elevated to varsity status on a trial basis. Since then, the teams and the Athletic Department have disagreed on the length of the promotion.

In an article published Tuesday in the Bryan-College Station Eagle, Texas A&M Associate Athletic Director Charles J. Thornton was quoted as saying that he told men's coach Telmo Franco three times that the soccer program would be dropped this fall. Franco said Tuesday that Thornton's statement was not true.

"Everything that Charley Thornton said in the Eagle is a flat lie," Franco said. "I was never notified that our team was not going to be on the varsity level. He (Thornton) should have sent me a memo or something. That's the way any organization should be run. I found out about us not being on the varsity level through one of his secretaries."

Thornton said he made it clear to Franco the program would be abolished.

"Coach Franco knew about us cutting soccer out since last spring," he said. "I met with Dr. (George) Kattawar (faculty sponsor of men's soccer) and

Coach Franco two or three times last spring and told them it was 99.9 percent sure we would not have varsity soccer this year.

"We made our decision after conducting an extensive survey on several other soccer programs in the state and found out that there were only two schools in the Southwest Conference that had a varsity team and none of the other schools were thinking about having one. The whole thing was just botched. It was bad communication. Coach Franco has said that he can't reach me but I've been here."

Athletic Council Chairman Tom Adair agreed with Thornton, saying he too knows that Franco was notified last spring of the demotion.

Franco said such a decision never was made at the meetings between him and Thornton.

"I never knew that we weren't going to be a varsity team," he said. "I heard rumors but I never knew. I spent all summer preparing for this year and now it

seems that I just wasted my time."

Kattawar, whom Thornton mentioned, said he was under the impression the soccer team would perform on the varsity level one way or another.

The Eagle article quoted Kattawar as saying that after a spring meeting with Thornton, he left "pretty sure (soccer) was dropped."

Wednesday, Kattawar said: "That didn't come out quite the way I said it. What it boiled down to was that we really didn't need any funding. Thornton told me that we probably would not be in the department but there was the possibility of forming a varsity-level team in which the team would perform on the varsity level but would not be funded by the department. He said he was going to form a committee to look into that possibility."

Jim Butts, the women's soccer coach, said he knew the varsity status was temporary but "we hoped to prove ourselves and

have the recognition extended."

Butts said: "I thought we proved ourselves. I mean, we ended up eighth in the nation last year."

The women's team, Butts said, has reapplied for varsity recognition since its varsity status was abolished. Butts said he discussed the soccer team's dilemma with Athletic Director Jackie Sherrill.

"I went up to see him and he explained the Athletic Department's situation and I explained mine," Butts said. "I left the meeting thinking that Mr. Sherrill is a very fair man and that if the decision was up to him, I believe that it would be in the best interest of the soccer team and the university."

But the decision already has been made. Naturally, the people who stand to lose the most are the players. Butts and Franco have attracted some of the best soccer players in the country and if those players decide to transfer to another university,

they could stand to lose a year of eligibility.

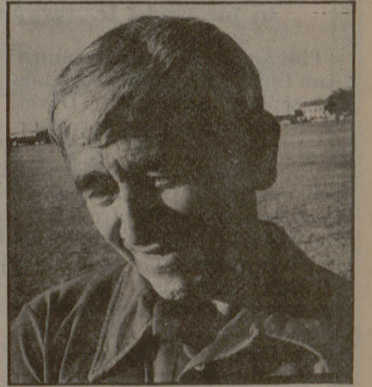
One player who already decided to transfer next year is all-SWC halfback Carlos Gutierrez.

"I think I'm going to transfer to either Stanford or Princeton," he said. "I'd like to stay here because I like the engineering school, but I wouldn't know what to do with myself if I didn't play soccer. I've played all my life."

Also, there's a strong possibility the men will not play any matches this year.

Franco said: "The decision really ruined the (soccer) careers of some of our players. If they transfer now, they probably will not be able to play on the varsity level for one year because of NCAA rules. And most of the teams on our schedule this year probably will not play us because they don't want to play a team that isn't varsity."

"Our team this year would



Telmo Franco



Charles J. Thornton

## Aggie football has endured its ups and downs

by Ritchie Priddy and Todd Woodard

Battalion Reporter

We were sitting in the north grandstand of Kyle Field at Texas A&M in a mid-October 1979, confident that our Aggies could hold a 14-10 "Zing" against the Houston Oilers.

With the clock four seconds off a minute, Cougar quarterback Terry Elston threw an "I've-closed-my-eyes-hope-you-catch-this" pass toward the right sideline, a pass that flanker Eric Herring pulled from between two Aggie defenders.

A few seconds later, Elston, apparently running with eyes wide open, crossed the Aggie goal, shocking more than 59,000 viewers into silence.

The final score was 17-14. Dejected, we ambled down the stadium steps behind a man in his mid-30s with a boy, about 5, in tow. Each wore maroon pants, topped by a white knit sports shirt. The boy's shirt read, "An Aggie's Son."

The father lifted his son, perched him on his shoulder, and the boy asked the father if he had enjoyed the game.

"I had fun, Daddy," the boy

said. "But why didn't the Aggies win?"

The father didn't have a ready answer. He stammered, shuffling his feet in the exit line: "Well, son, I don't know. But

*"I don't think we've been unsuccessful, but we have not attained, particularly in football, the level that the majority of former students believe we should have attained."* — H.R. "Bum" Bright, chairman of the Texas A&M System Board of Regents.

we'll get 'em next time." Getting them next time has been a familiar refrain of Texas A&M supporters for years.

Since the school rolled out its first team in 1894, Texas A&M

has a winning percentage of .551, with 448 wins in 814 games. The school has one national championship (1939), 11 Southwest Conference championships and 13 bowl games (8-5 in bowls). But part of that winning record is skewed toward the formative years of Texas A&M, when it took big wins over the Deaf & Dumb Institute in 1904 (49-0), Transylvania in 1910 (33-0) and the Houston YMCA in 1905 (29-0).

In those early years, Texas A&M's strong connection with the Reserve Officer Training Corps was an advantage — healthy, strong, well-trained bodies could take tactical advantage of opponents. The University was a football fortress for ROTC trainees, properly called cadets.

However, during the last 20 years, Texas A&M has fared much more poorly.

While the University of Texas' record was swelling like an overworked, blood-filled bicep, Texas A&M's record was comparatively meager. The win-loss record from 1960 to 1981 runs 106-119 with three ties, under coaches whose records

many Aggies would like to forget: Jim Myers, H.C. "Hank" Foldberg and Gene Stallings.

In fact, it wasn't until Emory Bellard established his ball control offense and debilitating defense in the middle 1970s that the maroon bumper stickers appeared, proclaiming: "Aggie football — The joking's over."

Remember that the second-largest land grant university in Texas has been the SWC champion in the Cotton Bowl once in the last 40 years, only three times in the 46-year history of the bowl. Texas A&M would have represented the SWC in 1958, but Paul "Bear" Bryant's

9-0-1 team was on probation.

Since 1958, Texas has picked cotton 12 times, Arkansas 4, Houston 3, Baylor 2, SMU 1 (plus one probation that kept the Mustangs out of a bowl), and A&M 1.

One of the coaches who contributed to Texas A&M's substandard record was Foldberg, who now works in real estate in Arkansas. His teams from 1962-64 compiled a 6-23 record.

Foldberg was one of five coaches the Aggies have had since 1958. Myers (1958-61, win-loss record of 12-24-4) and Stallings (1965-71, win-loss record of 27-45-1) now work for

the Dallas Cowboys.

Bellard took over after Stallings left in 1971. After two rebuilding years, Bellard gave Texas A&M its first winner since 1967; his 1974 team was 8-3.

In 1975 and 1976, his teams went 10-2, but still no Cotton Bowl. In 1977, his record fell to 8-3, and the year after, he resigned with a 4-2 record.

Tom Wilson took over in mid-season 1977, capping an 8-4 season with a 28-12 win over Iowa State. Wilson spent a troubled three and a half years (going 21-19) before being replaced by Jackie Sherrill.

Fortunately for the Aggies,

the problems that caused their mediocre showings in the 1960s, '70s and early '80s seem to have faded, along with Texas A&M's all-male, all-military, all-white past.

Multimillionaire businessman H.R. "Bum" Bright, Texas A&M Class of '43 and now chairman of the Texas A&M System Board of Regents, said he believes poor planning caused many of the substandard showings.

"We haven't succeeded because we haven't focused on it; we haven't had measurable

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