

A&M soccer

(continued from page 13)

Texas A&M veterinary medicine program and his desire to participate in what he thought would be a varsity soccer program under Franco.

"His (Franco's) voice was a deciding factor in my coming to school here," he said. "When I came to visit during the spring, he gave me a pamphlet and told us about the dorm we'd be living in and the place we'd be eating all our meals together."

The pamphlet, entitled "Texas A&M 1982 Soccer: Our First Varsity Year," listed four lighted practice fields, indoor facilities, weight training for athletes, complete medical facilities and athletes' cafeteria as conveniences which would be available to Texas A&M soccer players.

But the soccer players have not received all of these promised facilities. In fact, even if the Aggies' varsity status had been awarded for this year, the team members would not be living in the University's athletic dorm or eating in its cafeteria.

Triolo said the Aggies' loss of varsity status became particularly distressing after the team had endured eight days of two-a-day workouts starting Aug. 19. Franco held practices from 5:45 a.m. to 8 a.m. each morning on the main drill field and from 6:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. each night. In addition, the team had "chalk talk," or separate group meetings from 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. each of those eight days.

That's quite a time commitment. "I thought I could help our team grow to national status while I was here, because I thought it would be a challenge to build the team up," Triolo said.

"They (the Athletic Department) can't have any perception of what's going on with soccer and the growth of it. They've never worn our shoes and they've probably never watched a soccer game."

Gutierrez, who as a freshman last year made the all-Southwest Conference Soccer League team, said the status of the squad and the limited amount of recognition have caused him to consider transferring to another school. Before coming to Texas A&M, Gutierrez had been accepted by Stanford and Princeton. Both schools have varsity soccer programs.

"Before I came here," Gutierrez said, "I heard from Coach Franco that the team was going to turn varsity, and it did for a year. But I thought it was going to stay that way."

Gutierrez receives two financial grants to help pay for school expenses, so he doesn't need an athletic scholarship. He said if the Texas A&M club can maintain a certain degree of success at the extramural level, he might not transfer to another school, since he would have to wait a year before regaining soccer eligibility.

The women's club, whose faculty sponsor is Dr. Sue Beall, made its latest request for varsity status during the first week of school. In the request, women's coach Butts said, Beall asked for elevation to varsity status only, not funds to support the team's efforts.

The Athletic Council did not announce a final decision on the women's status at last week's meeting.

"We'd like to piggyback (soccer) where the soccer team can play on Saturday afternoons when the football team plays that night." — Bill McLellan, Clemson athletic director.

meeting. Butts' deadline to tell the NCAA whether his club would compete as a varsity this season passed Sept. 15, so any chances of the Aggies participating in the national championships were lost at that time.

But what would it take for soccer to become a full-fledged varsity undertaking at Texas A&M?

Groff, who handles most of the Athletic Department's finances, estimated that a successful soccer program needs at least \$100,000 in support. Of this figure, he said, about \$40,000 finances the 10 or 12 scholarships for team members, and \$15,000-\$20,000 goes toward the coach's salary.

But Groff said elevating one

sport to varsity status might cause problems among parents of other athletes and among other campus athletic clubs.

"If you're talking about supporting one sport over another sport," Groff said, "then the parents of the athletes in other sports will complain. If you spend, say, \$5,000 on the soccer program, which isn't enough to point a stick at, the parents of those kids will ask why other sports get more money for their equipment."

"Where do you stop? The other clubs would also want support and varsity status. In that case, we'd have to ask the University for (financial) help."

Groff said the soccer squads' loss of varsity status doesn't involve a lack of interest on the part of the Athletic Department, nor does it mean a greater emphasis is being placed on other more established sports. It simply means that, with the various factors involved in giving a sport varsity status, more study must be devoted to the entire procedure through which a club can be elevated to the varsity level.

"I'm not anti-soccer," Groff said. "I definitely believe it's an up and coming game."

Other schools with successful athletic programs have brought soccer to the varsity level and have watched their teams prosper under full support from fans and officials.

Bill McLellan, athletic director at Clemson, said a key to the success of the Tigers' soccer program has been the support of its boosters.

Men's soccer at Clemson reached varsity status in 1967.

McLellan said, when Clemson athletic officials felt it was "a viable sport to put in on the varsity level."

The Tigers' athletic scholarships are provided through the 45-year-old IPTAY Club, the Clemson equivalent of the Aggie Club. McLellan said the athletic department awards the full complement of athletic scholarships available, which for each NCAA Division I school totals 70 in all sports other than football.

As part of a \$5.8 million athletic budget, McLellan said, the Clemson soccer program's

funds amount to about \$50,000 a year. McLellan said he anticipates the Clemson soccer program, which does not include a women's team, becoming the school's next self-supporting sport.

"I foresee the soccer program being able to finance itself down the road," he said. "We'd like to piggyback the sport where the soccer team can play on Saturday afternoons when the football team plays that night."

But Groff said that big-money undertakings in Texas A&M soccer can only be "somewhere down the line."

There may be hope for Aggie

soccer in the future. At this point, Texas A&M athletic officials have devised a plan for studying the procedure a sport must follow to become a varsity-recognized organization.



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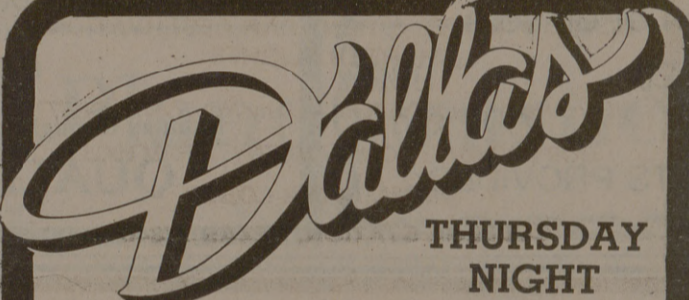
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