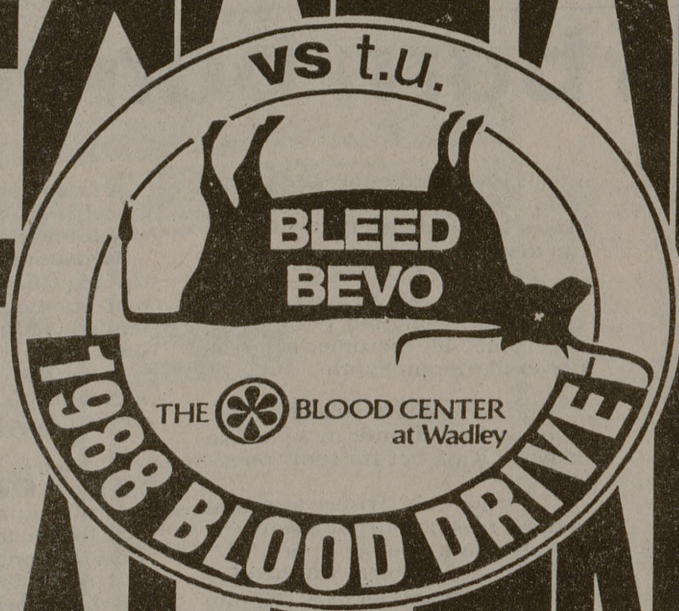


TEXAS A&M CHALLENGE



Soccer team thrives after drop to extramural status

By Stephen Masters
Reporter

In European countries, it's easily the most popular professional sport around, drawing millions of fans per season. In America, it's more popular indoors professionally, with thousands of spectators. At Texas A&M, the team considers 50 or 60 a good showing.

The Texas A&M Men's Soccer Club was formed in the fall of 1982. The varsity soccer program was dropped during reorganization of the athletic department after Jackie Sherrill became athletic director. Now the team is a part of the Texas Intercollegiate Soccer League along with six other teams.

"The coach was offered a Division II bid, but he wanted Division I or nothing, so he got nothing," said John Baldwin, president of the soccer club. "He left and they dropped the varsity program so we became a club team."

Although the 16 to 20 member team is primarily oriented for fall seasons, they have competed in two tournaments this semester and will compete in two more — the Southwest Conference tournament, which they will host in early April, and Southern Methodist University's Lotto tournament.

"Last semester the Sam Houston State coach devised a round-robin schedule for the teams in the League, so now we play according to that," Baldwin said. "We always play

Texas Tech, even though they moved out of our conference. We play them according to the football schedule. Last year the football team was at Tech, so we were too," he said.

The other teams in the League are Southwest Texas State University, Stephen F. Austin University, Sam Houston State University, Texas, Baylor and Rice.

"Last semester we were fourth in the conference tournament," Baldwin said. "We lost to eventual champ Sam Houston State in the semifinals, 2-1. They used to be a Division II school but dropped to club status. Most of their players were recruited when they were Division II though and they stayed on with the club team."

"We don't strictly play club teams though. We played in a tournament with Midwestern, a Division II school, before school even started."

The work involved in extramural sports took its toll on grades of the players in the fall, Baldwin said.

"Last semester we played in too many games, about 15 or 16, and grades suffered," he said.

"We had a lot of people show up for tryouts, between 60 and 70 players, but had to cut most people to make the team more competitive. Now we've got a problem with grades, so anyone that has a soccer background and is interested should contact us through the extramural office."

Baldwin also claimed that the players don't always try out because the team is organized as a club instead of in the athletic department. He said some of the best players, international students, don't try out because they think they don't fit in. He stressed that everyone is welcome to try out for the team.

The difference between athletic department teams and club teams is simple to Baldwin.

"Basically, the main difference is money and publicity," he said. "We have one person working in an extramural office for us, but she has to cover all the other extramural sports too. We put up flyers around campus, but it's really hard to get people's attention."

The team receives a budget of \$1,200 from the extramural office but has to earn additional money through fund-raisers because it has to pay for travel, accommodations, tournament entry fees, referees and any other possible expenses. This does not leave much money for a coach.

"We don't have a coach because we just don't have the money," he said. "This makes it even harder for us, because it's difficult to evaluate players while we try to get into shape to play. We do have a strategy for what we want to do, but we'd be a better if we had someone on the sidelines to evaluate the team and individual players. I think that's the hardest part about being a club team."

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Polo gaining in popularity at A&M; players expound on game's virtues

By James Johnson
Reporter

Admittedly, horses are usually synonymous with Texas, but what few may realize is that the equestrian sport which Argentina has historically excelled in is finally gaining popularity in the Lone Star State and at Texas A&M.

Collegiate polo, a ball game played on horseback in an arena of no specific diameters, is a team sport consisting of three players. The teammate's purpose is to drive a ball through his opponent's goal posts with long mallets during four periods of play, similar to the game of hockey. The only major difference between regular polo and collegiate (arena) polo is that regular polo is played in six periods instead of four.

Because of more formidable weather conditions, A&M, like most other southern teams, gets more practice time on outdoor fields. According to Michael Ross, president of the A&M polo club, that could sometimes serve as an occasional drawback since arena polo is the standard type that is played collegiately.

"Since teams up north don't have as comfortable weather conditions, they get much more practice in an arena which gives them a distinct advantage in competition," Ross said.

He added that polo is one of the more expensive sports on campus,

mainly because of the use of livestock and the numerous forms of protective equipment such as polo boots, knee pads, mallets, and helmets.

However, he predicts the costs of the sport to possibly decrease in the future since some cattle prices are falling.

Over recent years, the sport has also undergone a great expansion at A&M, according to Ross.

"When I started here in 1981, A&M was essentially the only Southwest Conference team," he continued, "and since then, the conference has added SMU, Texas Tech, and the University of Texas."

The four teams are joined by Colorado State University and Tulane to comprise the nation's central division.

Ross foresees the 1988 men's and women's teams as pretty confident about their upcoming seasons. The Aggie men's team won the SWC and Central Division title last year.

Intended the season in the nation's top five behind the University of California at Davis, a perennial power who won the championship last year. The women's team was not quite as successful, but are working very hard this season and are looking competitive, Ross added.

Kristin Matlack, a Fort Worth freshman said, "I've been riding horses all of my life and I wanted to continue doing something associated with them."

"I figured anyone could swing a mallet," she laughed, "and although the club only currently has about 25 members, it's a good way to meet people and have fun."

Currently, the men's team consists of Vicente Borrero, Tom Bacus, Wesley Sinor, while Donna Shiff, Portia Branson-Swales, Rene Sewell and Matlack will represent the women's team.

In addition to the sport's extramural schedule, the polo club plans to introduce the game to the community. Toward the end of March, the group plans to hold a benefit fund-raiser at their new game-site in Freeman Arena, located on Turkey Creek Road.

During the benefit, a demonstration of the game will be given along with pony pictures available for youth of the community.

Both teams practice on the Aggie polo field on Mondays from 6-9 the evening. Ross added that the general meetings are held every third Wednesday for interested competitors.

He knows that once the sport is exposed to the public more people will come to appreciate the excitement of polo just as he has in the past.

"The sport itself is addictive," Ross concluded, "I've played football, baseball, and basketball teams before, but I enjoy polo more than any other sport."

Bell hot over move from outfield to DH

DUNEDIN, Fla. (AP) — George Bell, one of baseball's most volatile players, swaggered onto the practice field for the first time Wednesday, still angry at the Toronto Blue Jays decision to make him a designated hitter.

"After the season I had, I come here and have no job," Bell said. "That's hard. But spring training is long. We'll see what is going to happen."

Bell, the last Toronto player to arrive in camp, met with Manager Jimmy Williams for 15 minutes prior to practice. Neither revealed what

was said, but the DH situation clearly was not resolved.

A day earlier, Bell said, "There's going to be a bomb explode" and openly challenged his manager.

"We'll see who lasts longer with our organization — him or me," Bell said. "I think we fight."

Bell, who is from the Dominican Republic, backed off that harsh criticism Wednesday, but would not apologize for what he said. Nor is he ready to accept the switch.

The Blue Jays plan to move Bell, the American League's Most Valuable Player from left field to DH. That would keep him fresh, and en-

able Toronto to get one of its top outfielders into the lineup, the team says.

As part of the plan, Lloyd Moseby will be shifted from center field to left. Moseby is complaining about the move, and that's another matter.

"I think time is a healer," Williams said. "But that may be wishful thinking in Bell's case."

It might take more direct action from Williams, who last year slammed Bell's respect by slamming a batting helmet at his stars' feet following an altercation.

Bell recently signed a three-year, \$5.8 million dollar contract.

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