

THE BATTALION
SPORTS

WHITE

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Head Football Coach Phillip Corbelli listened to his description of Peyton Manning immediately thought of White. "Page is the first person I thought of when I heard him describe Peyton Manning as the best player to ever coach," Corbelli said. "That's how I've always described Page."

White is the only player to see action in all 109 games her junior year, and her game exploded. She was named to the All-SWC first team and voted the team's Offensive Player of the Year by finishing second on the team with a .285 hitting percentage. In seven separate games, White shared or held the record for most kills.

Although White will be an integral part of the Lady Aggies' success, she said she does not feel she is the only one who must carry the weight.

"I don't feel like I have the burden of leadership," White said. "There's Kristie (Smedsrud), Farah (Mensik), Stacy (Sykora) and Cindy (VanderWoude)."

Junior middle blocker Kristie Smedsrud said both White's leadership and experience is what has helped the Lady Aggies reach three consecutive NCAA tournaments.

"In practice, she's the one to say, 'Let's step it up, let's go,'" Smedsrud said.

Corbelli said White's variety of strengths are what she contributes most to the team.

"The intangibles include the consistency of her attack, her knowledge of the game, and her ability to cover the whole range of the net," she said.

White's hard work and leadership-by-example style has earned both respect and trust from her teammates.

"There's a lot of respect," Corbelli said. "I think they trust Page that every day that she shows up she's giving her very, very best."

White admitted that in the past she didn't always give 100 percent but is committed to working hard in both practice and in the games. "In the past, I might have let myself get away with some bad practices, but now I'm making myself go hard every single day," White said.

As the Lady Aggies prepare to compete in the Big 12 against volleyball powerhouses the University of Nebraska and the University of Texas, White said she is excited about the new conference. Although she was previously worried about their chances, White said she now looks forward to the challenge.

"It's the most exciting challenge I've ever faced," White said. "It's just thrill of being against the best."

Regardless of what the Lady Aggies accomplish this season, White said she wants to be able to reflect back and know that she gave it her all.

"It's my senior season, so all that I'm thinking is no regrets," White said.

KOOP

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During Koop's senior year at Kingwood High School in Houston, she earned all-district MVP honors as well as pulled through second-team All-State second honors.

Koop said her coach at Kingwood helped prepare her for the rigors of Division I volleyball and playing a newly created team.

"Our team as a whole made a lot of improvement during my years at Kingwood, going to regionals in my first year and state playoffs in my second," Koop said.

"Of course, on a brand new team you always have to work to improve, so I was used to that situation."

In addition to her emotional leadership on the field, Koop was a statistical bomb last season, scoring 21 goals, 10 assists and 52 total points to rank fourth in the region and ninth nationally in scoring.

Koop holds the all-time A&M record for both goals (38) and points scored (102). Koop said she lists her fondest memory as a tie with Southern Methodist University during her first year on the team.

"We went out to play at SMU on turf, and we were total underdogs," Koop said. "But everyone gave 110 percent and worked their tails off, and we ended up tying the game."

Koop said she has hopes for the legacy her class will leave. "Hopefully, we'll leave with them the idea of what hard work can accomplish," Koop said. "We really see the camaraderies among this year's freshman class."

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SOCCER

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of play under their belt.

The Aggies have nine returning seniors including forwards Kristen Koop and Yvette Okler; midfielders Allison Buckley, Tania Castillejos, Jamie Cszimadia and Kimery Duda.

"Our team is trying to focus on improving during every game," Koop said. "It was easy being the underdog and surprising people, but now our offense and defense have to work together because anybody could try to knock us off."

Assistant Head Coach Kat Conner said the returning players will be the nucleus of the team, but the freshmen will play a vital part as well.

"Our returning players definitely add a lot to the team," Conner said. "Even with our freshmen we can sub-in at certain positions and still keep the level of play at a very high level."



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Kristen Koop
A&M senior forward

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