



Dave House, THE BATTALION

"To fight together for the Aggie dream, we're the 12th Man on that fightin' Aggie Team"

The embodiment of a sacred Aggie tradition, 12th Man Kickoff Team makes daily sacrifice

By MATT MITCHELL
THE BATTALION

They are the envy of every Texas A&M student in the stands. They attend every practice and every game as members of the Texas A&M Football Team. Most importantly, they are the living symbol of the most sacred of Aggie sports traditions. For the members of the 12th Man Kickoff Team, just being a member is hard enough. "This is my fourth year out here and wouldn't trade the experiences for the world," senior James Muniz said. "I've made so many good friends out here and met so many different people and people from other schools. Just the feeling of running out on the field with 10,000 people watching, you just can't explain it. It's the most unbelievable feeling I've ever had in my life." Ironically, A&M wasn't Muniz' first

choice in colleges to attend, but his father graduated from A&M and insisted that he give it a shot. With the promise of a transfer if he didn't make it, Muniz tried out for the team. Sure enough, he made it, and has been a member of the team ever since.

Family ties are a recurring theme among the 12th Man members, including senior Russell Kallus, whose sister was his family's first Aggie and convinced him to enroll with stories of Aggie hospitality. "She'd come home on the weekends and bring home a lot of stories about A&M and the great traditions that were here and how everybody made you feel like a part of a family," Kallus said. "I guess that's the main thing that brought me to A&M. I hadn't played foot-

ball since I was a seventh-grader and I didn't want to give it up yet.

"Throughout high school, I knew I wanted to play college football somewhere and I knew I wanted to come to A&M after hearing the stories. I came on as a walk-on and was one for three years and this is my first year as a 12th Man."

Sophomore Chad Frantzen turned down the chance to play for smaller schools to attend A&M. "Coming out of high school I had a chance to go to small schools, but I liked A&M. I came here, but I missed [football] so much that I tried out in the spring. I walked on and made it and then made it as the 12th Man this year. This is my first year, so it's been real exciting. It's

been a really great experience, overall."

Contrary to popular belief, the members of the 12th Man Kickoff Team do not just practice kickoffs and then call it a day.

"It's pretty much the same as everybody else — we're out here all the time," Muniz said. "We come out before practice and do all the special teams stuff. We work out with the team and go about an hour and a half every day. We come out here early on Tuesdays and Wednesdays and do 12th Man drills before everyone else gets out here so we can get some work in, and then go to regular positions and practice with them."

Special Teams Coach Shawn Slocum said the 12th Man Team's commitment to hard work and daily effort are an important part of the team.

"Those guys are invaluable for us," Slocum said. "They do a lot for us other than just covering kickoffs. They help us in practice every day and they play a vital role in our preparation for our opponents."

Slocum said that the members of the 12th Man Kickoff Team do not get any free rides just because they are part of an A&M tradition.

"We put them in a position on the kickoff coverage team, and we expect them to perform like we would anybody else," Slocum said. Just being able to perform is gratification enough for the members of the 12th Man Kickoff Team.

"You get such an adrenaline rush," Muniz said. "To not even hear what everybody's saying, but to just feel everybody yelling. You feel it more than you can see and hear it. It's just incredible."

The 12th Man members get a special feeling just walking around campus.

"You're pretty well-respected because you're representing the student body," Frantzen said. "When they see you around campus, they won't know you, but when they see you on the field, they know. It's like you're what everybody wants to be but can't, and that's a real thrill."

"Those guys are invaluable for us. They play a vital role in our preparation for our opponents."

Shawn Slocum
Special teams coach

A&M in-line hockey team quietly earns a national reputation

By DENNIS RAMIREZ
THE BATTALION

Most students do not realize it, but there is a "dominant force" lurking around the Texas A&M campus and in the Southern Collegiate Hockey League — a team in the hunt for a national championship.

Boasting a No. 7 national ranking, the A&M In-line Hockey Team is in its second semester in the new hockey conference along with nine other teams from around Texas, including the University of Texas and Texas Tech University.

Because the club team has only existed at A&M for three years, it has received little of the spotlight. But according to team coach and defenseman Mike Holzer, the team is better structured this year and has gained a strong reputation so far.

"Last year marked a start for not only the new league, but also the team here at A&M," Holzer said. "This year, the league is better organized and offers a number of better teams to compete with."

"As a team, we are much more serious this year, from official tryouts to intense practices, the team has gained a reputation around the league as being aggressive, physical, and a strong team."

The team itself consists of 17 members who practice just twice a week because of inadequate facilities in the Student Recreation Center. The team must travel an hour to The Woodlands to hold practices.

Junior offensive player Kris Cravens said the team had been able to overcome this to move forward in accomplishing its goal.

"Although we have a variety of different guys with different personalities, we all have the same goal and desire and that allows us to be a true team," Cravens said. "To do our best as a team and to improve our skills would be the main goal, but the underlying goal would be to be good sportsmen and represent A&M well."

The sport is unique in that players must have the ability to play hockey with in-line skates in an ice-free rink. With the exception of having one less person on the rink,

in-line hockey is organized along the same lines as ice hockey.

"It is faster paced and high scoring," Holzer said. "There are a few different rules, but for the most part it is the same with the main difference coming in the fact that there is minimal contact."

The team has experienced much success in its short existence, qualifying for the national tournament in its first season last year. This season, the team has attended two tournaments, finishing second in Austin and winning the Sam Houston State University Really Late Tournament.

The team has high expectations of improving on last year's national appearance.

"Last year, we won the Southwest region and finished No. 7 in the nation," team captain Mike Post said. "We are striving to finish better, because we want to know how good we are. We have the skills to contend and know it's just a matter of how we measure up with the best teams in the nation."



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Forward James Stenson, a junior BANA major, slips one past goalie Kris Cravens, a junior journalism major, Wednesday.

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