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Aggies boom Sooners in season opener

Gamble pays off for Blalack, A&M Soccer

By KRISTINA BUFFIN
Staff writer



DAVE HOUSE/THE BATTALION

Freshman Heather Wiebe charges the goal in Saturday night's game against the University of Oklahoma. The Aggies are ranked No.6 in the nation.



DAVE HOUSE/THE BATTALION

Senior Bryn Blalack looks up the field Saturday night's 2-1 victory over Oklahoma. Blalack was named a preseason All-American.

Three years ago Bryn Blalack took a risk on playing soccer at Texas A&M. And from the way it looks going into her senior year, the risk is paying off.

The sixth-ranked Aggie Soccer Team has emerged from an unknown club sport to a Division I-A national soccer powerhouse. But the recruits who joined the program in 1993 did not know what to expect, let alone think they would compete for the national championship.

Blalack, a 1997 preseason All-American, came to A&M in 1994 from Newman Smith High School in Carrollton after racking up some pretty impressive statistics. She led her team to four consecutive play-off appearances and holds school records in six categories. Mind you, she did this while battling knee injuries in her junior and senior years.

"For her taking a chance on us because it was 1994 and our second season, it was like going into the unknown," said G. Guerrieri, A&M head coach. "For her and Diana (Rowe), two top 15 recruits, to make a choice and a chance on us kind of puts their footprints on the program."

And those footprints have made a permanent indention on the Aggie Soccer Complex and perhaps the biggest have been left by Blalack.

She led the Aggies last season for the third straight season with 69 points, coming from 28 goals and 10 assists. She was the Big 12 Co-Player of the Year and a finalist for the Hermann Trophy which is awarded to the nation's top collegiate player.

Blalack is the Aggies' career goal, points and shots leader with 62 goals, 155 points and 267 shots. She is third on the A&M career list in assists behind former Aggies Kristen Koop and Yvette Okler with 31.

"Bryn has been an All-American before, so it is something we almost expect of her," Guerrieri said. "We were surprised Diana was not one but people are only concentrating on Bryn. They are in for a rude awakening because we have a deep bench."

There are four seniors on this year's team, Blalack, Rowe, Jessica Mouske and Sonia Ibanez and coach Guerrieri is looking to them for leadership.

"The freshmen are good and they are fast learners," Rowe said. "We are here to provide leadership and be role models."

"Bryn is kind of like the rah, rah girl. She shows by example." Because Blalack has seen the Aggie program grow from its infancy to a perennial power, she is looking forward to her final season.

"We have taken tremendous steps and have had continued suc-

By STEPHEN BOUDREAU
Staff writer

size," Guerrieri said. "It brings energy out."

The Aggies dominated in ball possession for most of the game and outshot the Sooners 34-6.

A&M freshman Alison Peters, in the first game of her college career, started the scoring off 5:17 into the game.

Junior Sharon Pickering followed with a perfectly placed ball in the top, left corner of the net to give the Aggies a 2-0 lead at the half.

In the second half, A&M's play was marked with sloppy passing and OU started to break through their defense.

"It was kind of like everybody decided to let somebody else take up the responsibility," senior Bryn Blalack said. "I think it was just a little first game jitters."

With 23 minutes left in the game, Sooner Bridgette Smith scored OU's only goal of the game.

"I think that our inexperience showed in that we relaxed. We got a little casual," Guerrieri said. "For us to be a little rusty coming out of the gates, it's just the way it is."

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"I actually thought I was going to score on my own goal."

ASHELEY FENDLEY
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Sports Briefs

A&M puts on clinic at Georgia Invitational

Staff and Wire

The Texas A&M Volleyball Team won the Georgia Invitational in Athens, Georgia with a straight-set win over the host University of Georgia Bulldogs.

The Aggies won the third game of the round robin-tournament 15-9, 15-7, 15-6 over UGA.

Junior outside hitter Stacey Sykora lead the Aggies with 18 kills in the final game on her way to being named tournament MVP.

She was joined by freshman teammate Cindy Lothspeich on the all-tournament team.

The Aggies cruised through the tournament without losing a single set.

A&M opened play on Saturday with a 15-1, 15-10, 15-11 victory over the University of Arkansas-Little Rock.

The win was the first of the season for the volleyball team which went 0-2 in last week's State Farm/NACWAA Volleyball Classic in Stanford, California.

William and Mary University felt A&M's wrath in the second round as the Aggies cruised to an easy 15-2, 15-3, 15-5 win.

The team will be off until the home opener Sept 8, against Southwest Texas State University at G. Rollie White Coliseum.

Belle's hot bat leads ChiSox past Astros

CHICAGO (AP) — Albert Belle drove in two runs, reaching 100 RBIs for the sixth straight season, as the Chicago White Sox beat the Houston Astros 3-1 Sunday.

James Baldwin (11-13) allowed six hits and a run in 6 2-3 innings. Matt Karchner got three outs for his 12th save.

The game ended when Craig Biggio was thrown out at third as the Astros tried a double steal. Derek Bell was the plate with runners on first and second when catcher Jorge Fabregas nailed Biggio.

Belle doubled in a run in the third and had an RBI single in the fifth off Shane Reynolds (6-9).

The Battalion will be running weekly club sport features this semester, but we need your help. We are asking that all club sports bring us an information sheet as well as the phone number of the person on the team to contact.

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