

## BORN LEADER

### Davidson's leadership an asset to Aggies

BY JASON LINCOLN  
The Battalion

Although some top collegiate midfielders may be scoring powerhouses, the midfield is more often a playmaking position that sets up goals and defensive attacks. The Texas A&M Soccer Team boasts a talented midfielder that excels at the playmaking role in addition to being a scoring force. Senior Mandy Davidson has left her mark in the Aggie midfield as she closes out her final season in style.

In a four year career thus far highlighted by 45 starts, a Big 12 Championship and three berths to the NCAA Championships, Davidson has found success with Aggie soccer. The senior team captain does not have statistics of a dominant soccer player, yet has left her mark at A&M through consistent performance and team leadership.

The California native came to an up-and-coming A&M team that returned all 11 starters and immediately stepped in to leave her mark.

That early impact came through Davidson's personality, which led to her immediate acceptance by the team and a role that she would keep throughout her four year career.

"A big part of success in women's athletics comes from the chemistry of the team," A&M soccer coach G. Guerrieri said. "Mandy Davidson is one of the best people to help bring out the best in everybody and add to that chemistry."

"The way she deals with people is something we can all take a lesson from," Davidson's parents, Cliff and Marilyn Davidson, said they knew from the start that their daughter's people skills would be as important as her on-field contributions.

"We knew she'd make a good contribution on the field, but make an even bigger statement off the field," Marilyn Davidson said.

Marilyn Davidson said the qualities that characterized Mandy's upbringing were instrumental in her ability to accept a less glamorous role on the team for a significant leadership role.

But the midfielder would not be content with a leadership position that did not involve competitive on-field action. To achieve the role she desired with A&M soccer, Davidson had to make strides on the field to make an impact and win a starting role.

"She's made a lot of sacrifices over the past few years," Guerrieri said. "She's also made a lot of improvements and as a result she has become a more complete player."

The senior takes the same leadership example on the field, putting the team's success ahead of any possible glory for herself.

"I've always considered myself — on the field — as a playmaker," she said. "I'm not the person who does the big exciting things, but I keep things consistent. I think that's my role as a center midfielder."

"It may not be the most glorious spot, but I love what I do and I'm happy to let other people shine."

Davidson has still managed to contribute a spark this season, adding another scoring threat to the Aggie offense. It took Davidson until her junior year to score her first collegiate goal. This year, she is fifth on the team with three goals and also has two assists for a total of eight points.

"I used to score goals, and then when I came to college I hit this slump where I couldn't score from the midfield," Davidson said. "To start the season off

with goals made it all the more fun and made me realize how much I'm going to miss it all."

The point scoring this season — in addition to her team leadership — has made a strong conclusion to her career with Aggie soccer.

"Having her in the program is reward enough," Guerrieri said. "But her performance on the field is even better."

When Davidson arrived at A&M, the team was only in its third season. Although the Aggies had already experienced success, there were still some unknowns.

With impact players such as Davidson, A&M has managed to develop into a consistent national force that is bigger than Davidson ever imagined.

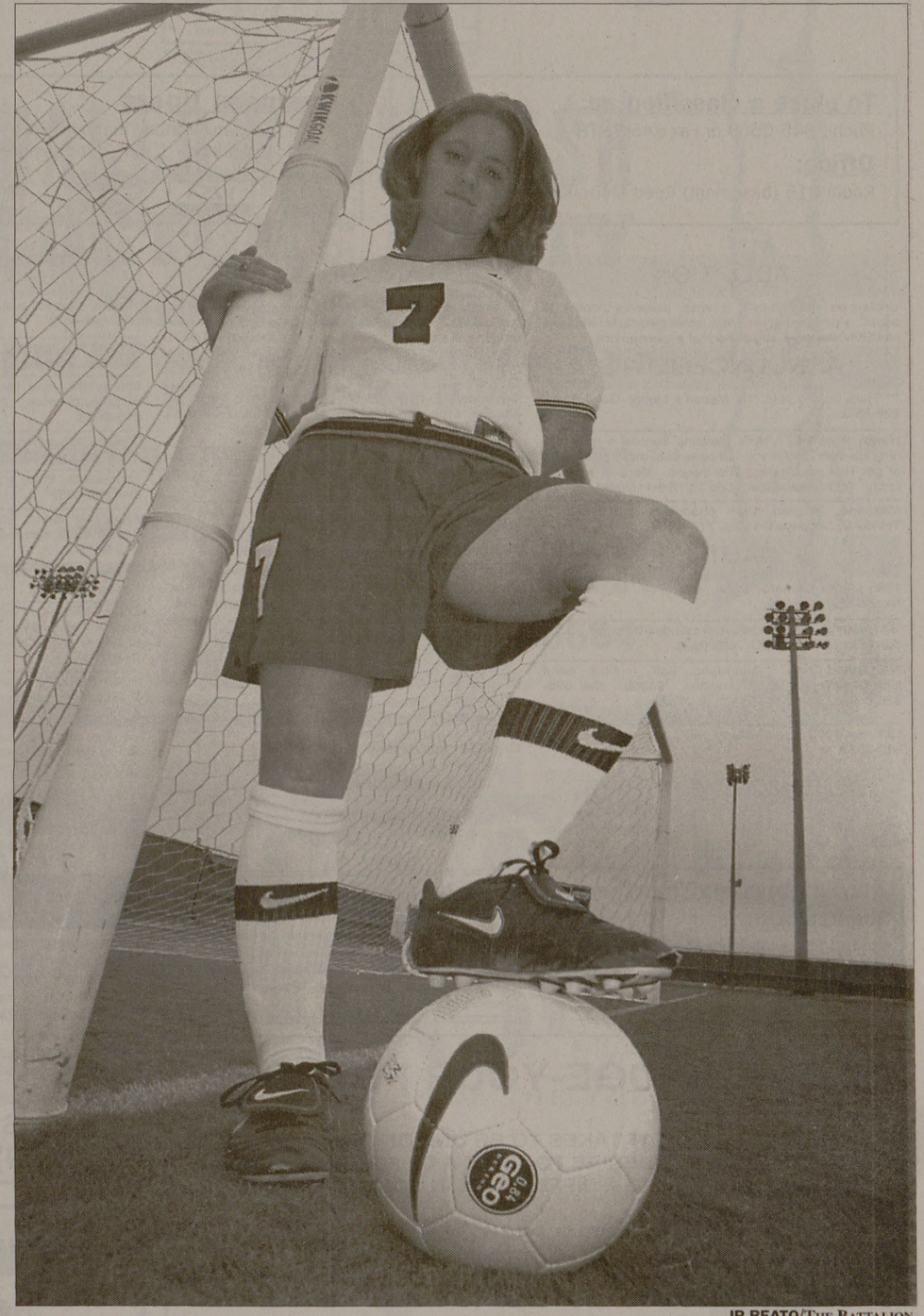
Davidson said while she has big hopes for her final postseason, she will be happy with her career at A&M regardless of how it ends.

"Texas A&M has been the biggest blessing I've ever had," she said. "I can't think of a better place to spend four years. No matter what happens, I'm going to be happy with my final season with the team."

"Looking at it right now, it could only get better by us playing well in the Big 12 Championships — hopefully bringing home another championship — and for us to make the playoffs and do our best in the NAAs. To have no regrets, that's what I'm hoping for."

Junior forward Nicky Thrasher said Davidson has left her mark on the team through her leadership ability.

"Mandy's awesome," Thrasher said. "She's a great leader on our team and will truly be missed when she's gone next year."



A&M senior midfielder Mandy Davidson has contributed to the Texas A&M Soccer Team over her career through both her strong play and her leadership qualities.

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