

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

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Soccer team begins run in Big 12 Tournament

By Troy Miller
THE BATTALION

The No. 3 Texas A&M women's soccer team (15-3-1, 9-0-1) is looking to defend its 2001 Tournament title and its 2002 regular season championship this week in San Antonio at the Big 12 Championship Tournament. The last time the Aggies won a regular season title was in 1997, when they went on to win their first-ever tournament crown.

The 2002 season has been full of ups and downs. The Aggies have a 14-game unbeaten streak, which is a team record for consecutive games without a loss. The streak started after dropping three matches in a row, which is the team record for most consecutive losses.

With the Aggies 2-1 win against No. 5 Texas Friday, giving them the regular season title, the Aggies secured the first end of the Big 12 Championship double-dip. Now that the first goal has been met, the Aggies are moving on to the next step in their quest.

"We're reassessing our goals for the rest of the way," said head coach G. Guerrieri. "We consider (the Big 12 Tournament) to be a season unto itself." The Aggies enter the tournament as

the number one seed by virtue of their first place finish in the regular season. They begin by facing off against the eighth-seeded Oklahoma State Cowgirls who are making their program's first Big 12 Tournament appearance.

The Cowgirls are coming off a 3-2 win against archrival Oklahoma. OSU sophomore Jeni Jackson scored a hat trick, or three goals, in the last six minutes to overcome a 2-0 deficit and give the Cowgirls their first Big 12 Tournament birth.

"(OSU) is going to be a hungry team," said Big 12 Offensive Player of the Week Emma Smith. "It's going to be a good game for us to go in and play first. It'll be a good hard game."

Smith has picked up her game as she has scored six goals in the last six games and is on a current six-game point streak. Coupled with sophomore Linsey Woodard, whose 13 goals lead the Big 12, the Aggie offense is running on all cylinders.

"(Our midfielders) have been unbelievable at getting behind people and sending in crosses," Smith said.

Freshman Kati Jo Spisak, the Big 12 Newcomer of the Week and First-Team All-Big 12 selection, has continued to

improve her aggressiveness in the net. Spisak made six saves against Texas, including a save on a penalty shot.

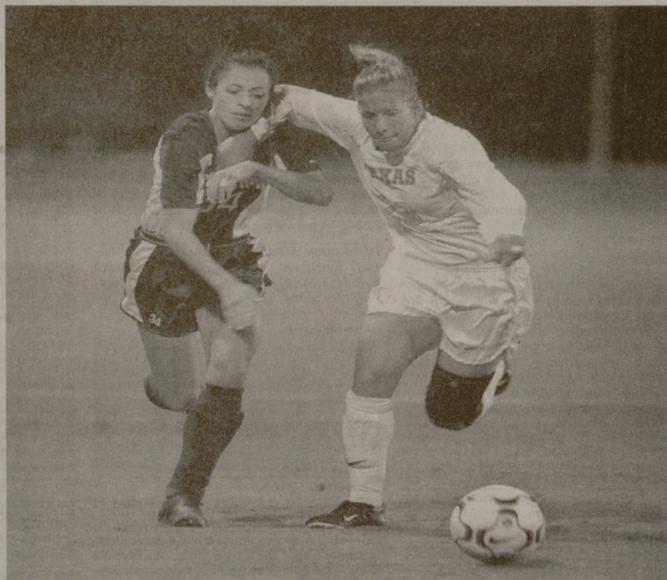
The rest of the defense, anchored by First-Team All-Big 12 selection Jessica Martin, has forced opponents away from their strategies.

"All over the field everybody, throughout the season, has stepped up," said senior midfielder Heather Ragsdale. "As a team we have started to play a lot better overall."

The competition in the Big 12 Tournament should be fierce. Texas, the No. 2 seed, did not lose a game until it faced the Aggies. No. 3 Nebraska won the Big 12 Tournament in 1996, 1998, 1999, and 2000 and No. 4 Missouri has netted 13.9 percent of its shots.

"We should be nothing but confident," Guerrieri said. "The players should have experienced the satisfaction of what hard work brings, and they've worked hard."

The Aggies begin play at 11 a.m. on Thursday against Oklahoma State at Blossom Field in San Antonio. The winner of that game will take on the winner of Missouri vs. Colorado in Friday's semifinal.



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A&M sophomore Linsey Woodard battles for the ball against Texas last week.

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PRO-LIFE POLITICS OF ABORTION BEYOND THE POLITICS OF ABORTION

David C. Reardon, Ph.D.

Everyone has an opinion about abortion. That's fine—up to a point.

The problem is when these political and moral views get in the way of efforts to help those who are hurting because of a past abortion.

Just for the moment, set aside the question of whether or not abortion should be legal, and ask yourself, "Shouldn't we all offer understanding and compassion to our friends and family members who are feeling grief over a past abortion?"

Most people would answer yes. Indeed, this is one of the few areas of common ground between both sides of the abortion debate. Unfortunately, people on each side generally believe that while they are understanding and compassionate, those on the "other side" are not.

The truth is closer to this: both sides really want to be understanding and compassionate, and both sides are blind to the ways in which they are failing in this regard.

As a result, women and men who are struggling with unresolved grief over an abortion are caught in a trap. They're boxed in by the politics of abortion.

On one side, they are afraid to share their grief with friends who are "pro-life" because they fear being condemned and rejected. On the other side, they've learned that when they turn to friends who are "pro-choice," their grief may not be acknowledged as truly valid.

Pro-Choice Denial

In the latter case, pro-choice friends typically try to offer support with words like, "Just forget about it. It was your best choice at the time. It wasn't really a baby yet. You can have another baby some day."

These statements are meant to offer reassurance. But those grieving a past abortion hear something else: "Just forget it. You didn't lose anything that was real." They walk away feeling that their grief is irrational, unimportant, or even abnormal, and so they bury their pain once more.

But this buried pain is exactly their problem! They want to expose it, work through it, and get beyond it—and they need the support of their loved ones to do this.

This is why people of every culture hold funerals and wakes. It is a time of open grieving when we acknowledge and validate each other's loss.

In abortion, something is lost. Whether you want to call it the loss of a child or just the loss of an "opportunity" to have a child, the loss is real. It has to be grieved and released. If friends and loved ones deny this grief, the grief process will actually be prolonged.

Yet pro-choice advocates often hesitate to recognize the reality of post-abortion grief because they fear this means they have to recognize the death of a baby, which may somehow undermine the political argument for legal abortion. Some extremists will even go so far as to deny that abortion can ever cause emotional suffering, a claim that is insulting to the millions of women and men who know differently from their own experience.

In short, the politics of abortion are getting in the way of post-abortion healing. Those who are experiencing grief do not need rationalizations or slogans. They need the reality of their emotional experience to be understood, accepted, and respected.

Pro-Life Judgmentalism

Now let's look at the other side of the trap.

Do women and men struggling with a past abortion feel comfortable talking about it with their pro-life friends? Rarely. This is because the pro-life movement has done a far better job of condemning abortion than of promoting compassion for those who have experienced it.

Most pro-lifers probably do want to be compassionate. They really do "hate the sin, but love the sinner." Unfortunately, this seldom comes through in their anti-abortion rhetoric.

Consider, for example, this comment made by many pro-lifers: "I can't understand how anyone could have an abortion." Sadly, anyone who says this is merely exposing his ignorance of the immense pressures which drive people to choose abortion.

Polls show that at least 70 percent of women having abortions believe abortion is immoral. Most of these women thought they would never have an

abortion. Many even considered themselves to be pro-lifers. But when they found themselves trapped in a hard situation, they ended up submitting to the "evil necessity" of abortion as their "only choice." With this fact in mind, a more humble pro-life attitude would be to say, "Who am I to throw stones at others?"

Secondly, pro-lifers who say, "I don't understand how anyone could have an abortion" are blind to how hurtful this statement can be. Think about it. What is the implication of this comment to a person who has had an abortion? Won't it be heard as, "Only an evil person could ever have an abortion?"

This is not what most pro-lifers intend to say, but it is the message that is heard.

Faced with comments like these, it is no wonder that most women and men hurting over a past abortion will go to great lengths to hide their secret. Would you share your secret grief over a past abortion with someone who "just can't understand" how anyone like you could do such a thing? Of course not.

Most pro-lifers probably don't intend to be condemning. Indeed, most would genuinely want to offer comfort and understanding. But the truth is, most don't know how.

Let's Face Their Reality

Bottom line: whether you consider yourself pro-choice or pro-life, it is essential to acknowledge the feelings of those who do feel pain after an abortion. Your political and moral views about abortion will not change how they feel. Pushing your views may simply prolong or aggravate their negative feelings.

Everyone, on both sides, can do better. Our friends and loved ones need us to do better. Reading this publication will help you do better.

David C. Reardon, Ph.D., is the director of the Elliot Institute and author of *Making Abortion Rare: A Healing Strategy for a Divided Nation*.



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