

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

Page 7 • Monday, November 18, 2002

Soccer team advances in thriller over SMU

By Troy Miller
THE BATTALION

Aggie freshman goal keeper Kati Jo Spisak came up big, saving three penalty kicks to lift Texas A&M to the NCAA Sweet Sixteen for the fourth consecutive season.

After battling to a 1-1 tie after two overtime periods with Southern Methodist University, Spisak saved three consecutive penalty kicks to give the Aggies a 3-2 edge.

"I was just thinking that if I save one, we'll win," Spisak said. "I ended up saving three."

A&M head coach G. Guerrieri could not say enough about the outstanding efforts of his freshman keeper.

"For Kati Jo Spisak to save three penalty kicks is almost unheard of at this level of play," Guerrieri said. "She's a clutch kid. As an old goalkeeper and as someone who has been recruiting goalkeepers all the time, as I've gone around the country one of the things that really stood out to me about Kati Jo is that she is brilliant at penalty kicks."

Laura Probst and Becky Olson, both freshmen as well, stepped up to keep the Aggie

hopes alive after A&M had its first two penalty shots blocked.

Probst and Olson buried their shots while Spisak denied the Mustangs. With the penalty kicks tied 2-2, senior captain Andrea Starns buried the shot to give the Aggies the win.

"I'm very mentally focused," Starns said. "I eat that kind of stuff up. (Guerrieri) asked who could take a PK and I said I would, and he said 'you ok with being fifth?' and I said bring it on."

The first 80 minutes of the match were a stalemate as both teams were fighting through a 0-0 draw. The Aggie offense posed problems for SMU, but could not find the net.

Play increased physically as Aggie sophomore Amanda Burke and senior Juli Goin were helped off the field with injuries. Junior Martha Moore also left after being shaken up in the 77th minute.

Then the game turned interesting as the Aggies scored the first goal of the match in the 83rd minute.

Starns fed sophomore Emma Smith on the right flank. Smith crossed to a wide-open

Ragsdale who was perched eight yards in front of the goal. Ragsdale's header hit the crossbar, then bounced down across the goal line.

Four minutes later, Mustang sophomore Jill Heinemann shot from 20 yards out. The shot hit the crossbar and bounced in front of Spisak.

"You don't see that happen usually more than two times a year," Guerrieri said. "They happened twice in the same 45 minutes."

The game went into overtime and both teams played a scoreless twenty minutes before going to the penalty kick shootout.

"I don't think anyone has ever come in the same weekend and beat Texas and Texas A&M," said SMU head coach George Van Linder whose team advanced to the second round by beating No. 8 UT 2-1. "It was a tough bracket."

This is third straight overtime game between A&M and SMU. A&M won the previous two matches, 2-1.

The Aggies will now travel to Los Angeles to play the seventh-seeded UCLA Bruins, who beat Southern California 1-0 in double overtime to advance to the Sweet Sixteen.



JOHN C. LIVAS • THE BATTALION

Aggie captain Andrea Sarns celebrates after kicking the game winning goal in the final penalty kick against SMU in Sunday's second round action.

Slocum deserves blame for Aggies' flat start, loss to Missouri

TALKING Points
Kevin Espenlaub

The 2002 Texas A&M football season has seen everything impossible finding a way to become reality.

A week after beating the No. 1 team in the nation for the first time in school history, the Aggies

dropped their fourth home game of the season to a 4-6 team and everyone who still considers themselves an Aggie fan should still be wondering what actually happened.

For his part, head coach R.C. Slocum said everyone could "draw their own conclusions" as to what happened.

So, here are my conclusions. The Aggies came out flat

against Missouri because they believed after beating Oklahoma they would easily be able to dominate a Missouri team that had only recorded one Big 12 victory, which came over lowly Kansas.

For what it matters, wide receivers Greg Porter, Bethel Johnson and linebacker Brian Gamble all seemed to agree.

"We weren't ready to play like we should have been," Porter said. "I think we were a little dead."

But, of course, Slocum didn't think that was the problem at all.

That would make sense because it is his job to motivate the team. Nobody who watched any of the first half of Saturday's game could say with a straight face that the Aggies were motivated.

If the football team and Slocum can't get up for a game where nearly 80,000 fans are cheering for

them, there seems to be a problem at the top.

Whatever happens in Austin (and the way this season has been, there's no telling what will happen), should not have any impact on R.C. staying at A&M.

He has failed the team, the fans and the school and it is time for a change.

Losing four games at Kyle Field, which used to be one of the most challenging venues for an opposing team to come to, is absurd and unacceptable.

With Mack Brown in Texas and Bob Stoops in Oklahoma trying to recruit the same players as A&M, a 7-5 or 6-6 season will destroy A&M's hopes of competing for serious players.

A change must be made and a real coach must take over the reins and keep A&M from becoming

another Baylor or Kansas.

Slocum has always said that half the teams in the nation lose every week.

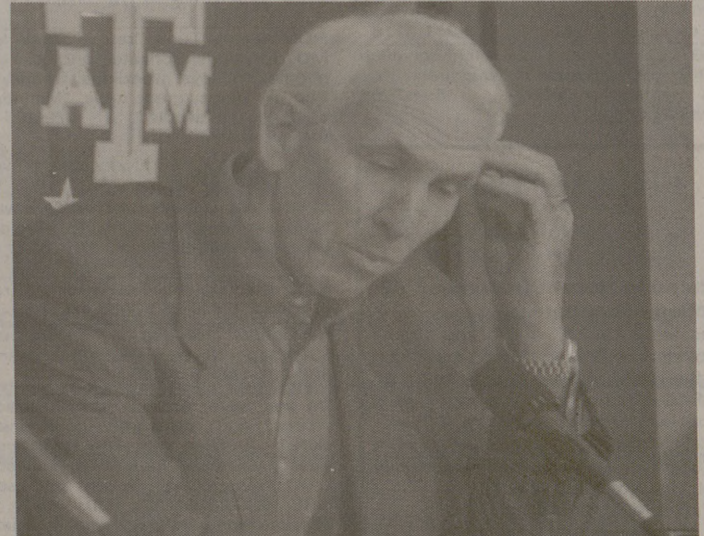
Sorry coach, but A&M should not be in that half of the teams.

This school and its fans have given exceptional support for your program, and it seems to be a poor investment from where I sit.

When a company fails to get a return on investments, the heat falls on the CEO. Slocum is the leader of this football program and is without a doubt failing to return on all of our investments.

As Gamble said following Saturday's game, "It's been a frustrating and wacky year."

Yes it has and hopefully Gates and his new athletic director will make a change to get this team back on track and make it a national power once again.



ALISSA HOLLIMON • THE BATTALION

A&M head coach R.C. Slocum reacts to questions after the game.

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