

THE BATTALION

# Spisak leads Aggies, ready for Utes

By Troy Miller  
THE BATTALION

When the last line of defense is beaten, in any sense of the phrase, bad things happen. For the Texas A&M women's soccer team, sophomore goalkeeper Kati Jo Spisak is that last line, and she isn't used to being beaten.

After a steadily improving freshman campaign, Spisak is ready to step up as the leader of the Aggie defense in 2003.

"This time last year (Spisak) was a meek little freshman," said A&M soccer coach G. Guerrieri. "Now, she has definitely developed into, I think, the premier goalkeeper in the country."

The 6'2" goalkeeper has allowed just one goal in 180 minutes of playing in net for the No. 6 Aggies (2-0). The goal she allowed was against No. 22 Southern Methodist University with less than three minutes remaining.

In front of Spisak is a defensive back line that has a few new faces. Joining returning starters Amanda Burke and Shannon Labhart are freshmen Linda Pierson and Annie Burnett.

"I feel confident with two new

freshmen playing," Spisak said. "I was kind of nervous coming into (the season), but they've stepped in right away and have done a great job."

With the Utah Utes (2-0) and freshman goalkeeper Ashley Mason coming to the Aggie Soccer Complex, Spisak and the Aggies have to stay at the top of their game.

Mason has allowed just one goal in 135 minutes of play. The lone goal was in a 4-1 Utah victory over then-No. 17 Michigan in Ann Arbor, Mich.

"We're giving (Utah) the respect they deserve," Guerrieri said. "They're a team that if you give them an opportunity they'll kill you."

Utah coach Rich Manning led the Utes to the second round of the NCAA tournament and a 13-4-3 record in his first season at the helm in 2002. In the NCAA tournament, Utah beat Portland, a perennial Final Four-caliber side.

Coming to Texas to face A&M is not an easy task, but Utah is used to playing tough teams on the road.

"The trip to Texas provides us with some great challenges," Manning said. "We are playing one of the top programs in the country in Texas A&M. I am sure



JOHN C. LIVAS • THE BATTALION

Texas A&M midfielder Becky Olson looks downfield for a chance to pass past TCU defender Moran Lavi on Aug. 29. A&M hosts Utah tonight at 7:30.

we will know a lot more about ourselves after this weekend."

Utah also boasts Mountain West Player of the Week senior midfielder Amber Brower. Brower scored two goals in the Utes' opening weekend, including a goal and assist against Michigan.

The Aggies also boast a powerful and fast offensive duo in junior Emma Smith and

freshman Kat Krambeer.

"Up front it's our job to score, but more importantly it's our job to have someone score," Krambeer said.

With two solid offenses and great goalkeepers, this game may come down to whose back line holds toughest. The Aggies feel confident in their young defense when they face Utah at 7:30 Friday night.

## Volleyball

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have much energy to spare. The team will have to hit the ground running as it opens the tournament against a strong Louisville team that has been no stranger to tough competition this year.

Coach Leonid Yelin has pieced together one of the toughest non-conference schedules in the country for his squad. The Cardinals opened the season against No. 13 UCLA, followed by No. 6 Minnesota, and finished off their weekend by taking on No. 2 Hawaii. The team managed to steal an upset from Minnesota, led by senior Sonja Percan, who amassed 19 kills.

"We try to get the best competition we can early, in the first three or four weeks before conference," Yelin said. "That way we can see where we stand and see what we have to do."

Michigan (1-2), the tournament's host school, is coming off a loss at Florida State on Aug. 30, the last time it saw action. Murray State will see the court for the first time in the 2003 season.

## Utah

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hinders the Utes' base 4-3 defense, a steady dose of blitz schemes allows the team to keep opposing offenses guessing.

"It seems like they try to blitz from everywhere and every chance they get," said junior A&M quarterback Dustin Long.

Senior middle linebacker Ray Holdcraft and senior strong safety Dave Revill are the two most likely candidates to capitalize amid the confusion.

Holdcraft posted eight tackles against USU, five of which were unassisted. Revill led Utah in tackles last year with 89, including nine tackles for a loss and three sacks.

"They've got talent," said A&M coach Dennis Franchione. "This team, if they were in the Big 12, would hold their own."

If Meyer's team can hold its own at Kyle Field this weekend, it will take a significant step toward the lofty goals set by the energetic coach. Kickoff is scheduled for 7 p.m.

## Golf

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from sophomore Ashley Frey, who finished second on the team statistically as a true freshman.

"I think Ashley is ready to step up this year," Sutherland said. "She had a very focused summer, and I think she's really working to improve her weaknesses. She has a lot of great strengths that are going to help her."

A&M also gained new confidence with its solid postseason play. Despite its greenness, the team reached the NCAA Central Regionals and placed ninth out of the 20 participants, barely missing the NCAA berth.

"When you have two or three inexperienced people in the lineup you have a lot of growing pains and they learn a lot of tough lessons because there's just no one else to depend upon," Sutherland said. "In the long run it's really good for them."



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