

AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

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This Texan has talent

Former Texas Aggie Dance Team member replaces Reed Arena with Reliant Stadium

By Lydia Adams
THE BATTALION

Some say cheerleading is all about beauty but, as Celina, Class of 2004 and former Texas Aggie Dance Team member will attest, making the Houston Texans professional cheerleading squad takes skill, dedication and motivation.

"They want girls that have brains, beauty and talent," said Celina, whose last name is withheld under Texans bylaws.

As her senior year at A&M wound down, Celina began searching for jobs in professional dancing and performing; although she didn't have experience in cheerleading, she decided to give it a shot.

"I was looking into the Houston Rockets and Dallas Mavericks, but started considering football," she said.

Houston was her first choice because there she could be near family, work at her father's advertising agency and still continue to do what she loves: dancing.

Celina said competing against 1,200 talented women, some who had already been on the Texans squad, was rather daunting.

"I didn't think I would make it," she said.

But Celina, who has danced since seventh grade, had just what the Houston Texans recruiters were looking for when she stepped into Reliant Stadium in April.

Celina's friends, family and coach never doubted her abilities. Celina's mom, Maria, played the ultimate supportive role, even registering to try out to be by Celina's side.

"They said everyone except participants had to leave, so me and some of the other mothers signed up and we were allowed to go in," Maria said. "Once they started dancing, I think I pulled a muscle, but we got to see the first tryouts."

Texas Aggie Dance Team coach Jennifer Hart encouraged Celina to be a professional cheerleader.

"I knew she would do well," Hart said. "She's very motivated and responsible."

Ashley Breitigam, a senior psychology major and friend of Celina's from the Texas Aggie Dance Team, said she knew Celina would make it.

"The Texans wanted dancers who had an all-around package, and she's a sweet, attractive, talented and smart girl," Breitigam said.

The two-week tryout process narrowed the hopefuls from 1,200 to 75, who learned several dances and practiced together until the last 36 were chosen.

The biggest factor in making it was a dancer's technique, Celina said.

Celina attributes her preparation to the type of dancing she practiced while on the Texas Aggie Dance Team, but she also has experience from her days at Oakridge High School near Houston where she was colonel of her drill team.

Celina said a benefit of her experiences on A&M's dance team has been her ability to handle a hectic lifestyle.

Balancing 11 hours of practice a week, performances and a full course load took a lot of work to dance through college, but it was worth it, she said.

"Anytime you are a part of an organization, you learn to plan your time," Hart said. "That will help her a lot as she juggles a full-time job and practices."

As a cheerleader, Celina is not just encouraged to be well rounded, but is required to have a full-time job in addition to the practices, games and appearances she does for the Texans. Contrary to popu-

lar belief, cheerleaders aren't paid a high salary.

"You do it because you love it," Celina said.

"A high point of the job is making required appearances to the public," she said. "We recently visited 2,000 Marines about to fly out to Iraq. It was great."

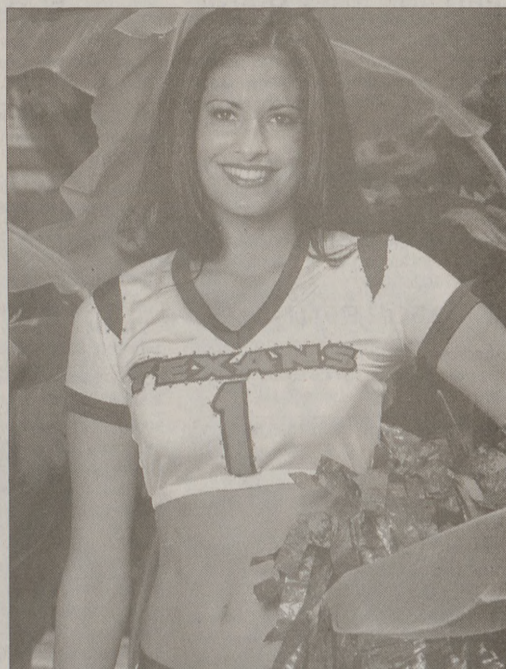
Although she left friends on the Texas Aggie Dance Team, Celina said she is becoming close with her fellow Texans cheerleaders.

"It's a tight squad," Celina said of the Texans. "The girls are so friendly and we mesh really well. They're a great group."

"She's definitely goal-oriented. She wanted to dance after college and look what she did," Breitigam said. "Ever since she got in, I've been thinking about trying out."

As for Celina's future plans, they include her life's passion of dance and her drive for success.

"I'm not ready to retire my pom-poms yet," Celina said.



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Celina was one of 36 dancers chosen for the 2004 Houston Texans professional squad.

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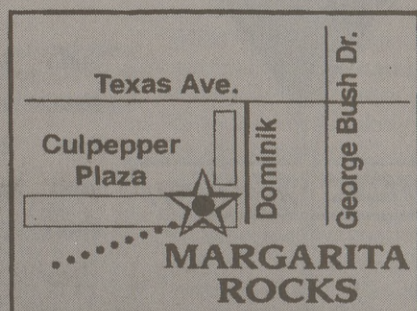
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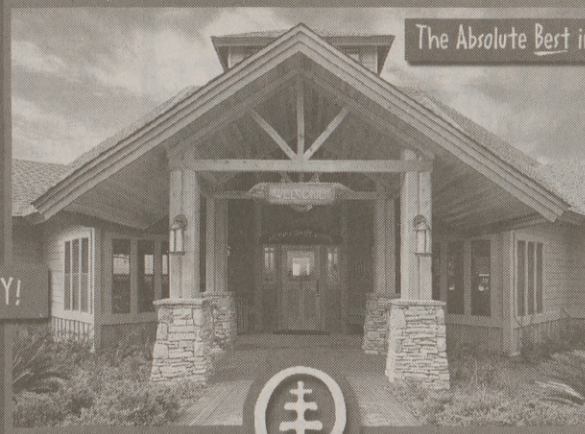
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