SPORTS

VOLLEYBALL

■ THE LADYJACKS EARNED THE U.S. MARINE CORPS AND AMERICAN VOLLEYBALL COACHES ASSOCIATION TEAM ACADEMIC AWARD.

CROSS COUNTRY

■ DIRECTOR OF TRACK AND FIELD / CROSS COUNTRY COACH PHIL OLSON HAS RETIRED AFTER 23 YEARS AT SFA.

FOOTBALL

■ WIDE RECEIVER XAVIER GIPSON IS THE WAC PRESEASON OFFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR.

SOCCER

■ CHRISTINA WAKEFIELD WAS RECENTLY NAMED ASSISTANT WOMEN'S SOCCER COACH.

COLUMN

Renee Fain
Editor-in-Chief

There are a lot of things to love about SFA: the trees, the colors, the squirrels. One of the biggest things that attracted me to SFA was the school pride. However, when I got on campus I realized that school pride didn't exist within students.

As a freshman, I remember someone telling me not to go to the football games because the team sucked. But I went anyway. I didn't act surprised when they won; I was just happy. In fact, during my freshman year, the football team only lost four of the 10 games they played. They seem to be keeping that pace up now, winning 8 of 12 games last season. So why are we still judging the team based off losses that happened years ago?

I'm tired of people saying they're "surprised the team is winning." Every Saturday when the fireworks would go off at the stadium, girls in my hall group chat would act like they didn't know it was happening – even though the team had won every home game last season. The only people who were really excited were the Alumni I'd see on Facebook. It should not be a surprise that the team is winning, especially after they have done so well the past two seasons.

Our Lumberjacks are winning, and we should focus on that. The games are exciting even if we don't win. Our team puts up a fight like never before and we should stop holding them to outdated standards. As every year passes, old players leave, and new players come in. It's like remodeling your kitchen and then being surprised that your fridge light works.

"This upcoming season, go to as many games as you can and see for yourself just how well the Lumberjacks put up a fight. I promise you won't be disappointed."

As a freshman, it's important to have school pride. You'll be here for the next four years – make those years fun and support your team. Don't listen to what everyone says and just focus on the positive. Buy the shirts. Go to tailgates. Yell when we make a touchdown. This upcoming season, go to as many games as you can and see for yourself just how well the Lumberjacks put up a fight. I promise you won't be disappointed.

Purple Lights: A winning tradition

File photo

The Purple Lights on the Steen Towers are an SFA athletic tradition that can be seen far and wide. Every time the Lumberjacks or Ladyjacks win a game—in any sport at home or on the road—two purple beacons can be seen in the night sky above campus. This Lumberjack tradition dates back many years. Originally, the purple lights were atop the 14-story Garner Tower. The lights were added to the Steen roofs in 2010 after Garner Tower was razed to make room for Lumberjack Landing.

Football home opener set for Sept. 24

By Renee Fain
Editor-in-Chief

Stephen F. Austin's football season kicks off on August 27, with the first game against the Jacksonville State Gamecocks in Jacksonville, Alabama. The Lumberjacks will bring it home on September 24 against the Warner University Royals. Homecoming week will take place October 24 – 29 against the Utah Tech Trailblazers and the final home game will be against the Central Arkansas Bears November 14.

Last season, the Lumberjack football team nearly dominated the Western Athletic Conference – winning eight of the twelve conference games. Fans got to scream and cheer in the stands of Homer Bryce Stadium as the football team axed every opponent that stood on their field.

There are some changes in the WAC this season. Recently The University of Incarnate Word agreed to join Stephen F. Austin State University Athletics in the Western Athletic Conference. They then withdrew and decided to remain in the South Land Conference. They are joined by Lamar University who also left the Western Athletic Conference and returned to the South Land Conference.

This fall, fans can fill the seats of NRG Stadium with their purple pride as we fight in the final Battle of The Piney Woods against Sam Houston State University on October 1. The rivalry almost as old as SFA itself comes to an end this year as Sam Houston State University moves to Conference USA. Sam Houston holds the current, and longest, win streak with ten consecutive games won. Sam Houston also has the most wins in the history of Battle of The Piney Woods, with a total of 58 victories out of the 95 matches.

Coach Colby Carthel will lead the team again this season, signing a five year contract extension with SFA in March of this year. Carthel has boosted the Lumberjack football team winnings during his three seasons at SFA – bringing the team up to a .636 winning percentage. With Carthel, the Lumberjacks advanced to the playoffs for the first time since 2014 in 2021. And as the Lumberjacks win more, purple pride spreads throughout Nacogdoches causing ticket sales to skyrocket and increase by 389%.

To order tickets ahead, fans can visit the athletics webpage at sfajacks.com.

Ladyjack bowler earns spot on Team USA

By Sandra Carranza
Managing Editor

Chloe Skurzynski, junior Ladyjacks bowling player, has earned a spot on Team USA bowling for 2022. Skurzynski obtained the spot by winning the U.S. Amateur portion of Team USA Trials held the first week of January in Las Vegas.

Skurzynski said this was only her second time bowling in the trials, and it was surreal to earn the spot on Adult Team USA because it mostly consists of professionals.

"I believe I'm the only college student on the team," Skurzynski said. "Everyone else is older; the female who won the event overall has been on Team USA for 22 years: longer than I've been alive."

But despite being the youngest on the team and the only amateur, Skurzynski said she is most excited about learning as much as she can from her professional teammates.

This summer, she will be going to the International Training and Research Center in Arlington, Texas, for Team USA camp; for a week, Skurzynski will practice with professionals she said she has looked up to growing up.

"It's a super cool learning experience to be with, literally, the best bowlers in the world," Skurzynski said. "To be able to learn from them and learn from the people that coach them as well."

Even though Skurzynski might not be selected to compete for the team, she said she is excited to learn from them this summer.

Amber Lemke, SFA women's bowling head coach, said being on Team USA is the highest level you can achieve in bowling, and it presents a great learning opportunity not only for Skurzynski but the whole SFA women's bowling team as well. Skurzynski will be able to bring back much of what she learns from the professional bowlers.

"It's exciting that she'll get to experience that and bring it back," Lemke said. "You know we've had other people on our team that have made Junior Team USA before; that experience that they get at that level – you can't replicate that."

Lemke said this win for Skurzynski is a push for the entire Ladyjacks team to want to perform better.

"I think that once you get a taste of what winning is like, it's going to make everybody better because you want to continue winning," Lemke said. "I think it's great for the program."

Hana Roers, Ladyjacks bowling player and general business major from Maple Grove, Minn., first met Skurzynski at the Team USA Trials in 2020. Roers said she has always admired Skurzynski.

"Chloe worked so hard to earn this spot, and I could not be more proud of her," Roers said. "Chloe lights up the room with her constant silliness and radiant smile, and this has not changed since she [became] the newest U.S. Amateur champion. I look up to her as a person, not just as an athlete."

Originally from Carlisle, Pa., Skurzynski transferred from University of Maryland Eastern Shore where she had also been on the collegiate bowling team. After sitting out of bowling for a year due to COVID-19 restrictions, she decided to transfer to SFA.

"SFA has always had a really strong [bowling] program," Skurzynski said. "[When] SFA won the NCAA National Championship in 2019, I was at my old university at that time. SFA actually beat us in the semifinals… and ended up winning the tournament as a whole."

Now at SFA, Skurzynski is studying psychology and minoring in sociology. Since bowling has been her passion since she was six years old, she said she will definitely be taking bowling with her into the future.

"[I'm] definitely going to bowl the rest of my time here at SFA," she said. "I've always been interested in the coaching aspect of it, so I could definitely see me stepping into that field. I want to keep it around in my life, [I'm] just not 100% sure in what aspect."

Apart from playing, Skurzynski said her favorite part about bowling has been the people she has met along the way.

"I've met really cool people not just bowling-wise but genuinely cool, good-hearted people," Skurzynski said. "They're people I would want to be friends with outside of bowling; I've been able to connect with a lot of people I don't see leaving my life."

Bowling is not an Olympic sport, but if Skurzynski is selected to play for Team USA, she could be representing the country at the World Games this year in Birmingham, Alabama.

Photo by Marcus Jackson / The Pine Log

Ladyjack Chloe Skurzynski was named to Team USA Bowling earlier this year.

WAC Coach of the Year

By Emily Nava
Photo Coordinator

Mark Kellogg

After a successful 26-4 2021-2022 regular season, SFA's Women's basketball Coach Mark Kellogg received the Western Athletic Conference Coach of the Year award.

This award was not Coach Kellogg's first as he previously received the Southland Coach of the Year in the previous 2020-2021 season. Kellogg has been with SFA since 2016 and has had much success with the team thus far.

His first year with the Ladyjacks the team ended up third in the Southland Conference, second place in the Southland Conference tournament and appeared in the Women's Basketball Invitational. His success continued to grow with the team every year and in the 2020-2021 season the team made it to the NCAA first round. After the regular season this year, the Ladyjacks clinched another spot in the NCAA after winning the WAC tournament in Las Vegas defeating number four, Utah Valley and number two Grand Canyon.

With COVID-19 still prominent this season, many injuries and the Ladyjacks being put into a different league, a lot of learning and adjustments had to be made but Kellogg and the team pushed through.

Senior Guard Stephanie Visscher and Senior Guard Brianna Mitchell both described Coach Kellogg as a great coach and a family man who always prepares the team as best as they can for all their games. Visscher came from Sweden to play basketball here at SFA which was a big adjustment for her to make.

"One reason I was ready to take that leap was because of Coach Kellogg and the trust that I felt coming from him. He really cares about you as a person off the court which I think is very important. We go through so many workouts, conditioning, weights and hours of practice. Having a coach that understands that you are actually a person off the court and understands that piece of it is extremely important," Visscher said.

With this being the second time the team is going to the NCAA tournament the team is feeling excited for what is to come. "The plan is to advance. We don't just want to be participants. It's an uphill battle. North Carolina is a really good basketball team and they are ranked for a reason. I think we drew so much confidence now going back knowing that we have an opportunity to truly advance. The next step for our program is to advance and once we do that I think our confidence will grow and grow. You have to win one before worrying about the next," Kellogg said.

The Ladyjacks went up against number five North Carolina in Tucson Arizona on Mar. 19 in the NCAA tournament. The final score was 79-66 with UNC taking the lead.