

What, Exactly, is the 12th Man?

By the time a freshman arrives at Texas A&M, they have likely been exposed to many jokes, myths and legends about the University. Certainly they wonder, can it really make all that much of a difference to be an Aggie? After all, every large school has a mascot, a fight song, their own meaningful rites of passage and credos. What makes Texas A&M so storied? Why does it have, what some refer to, as a cult-like following?

The answer is The 12th Man. Being a part of The 12th Man means being a part of something bigger than yourself. An Aggie counts and anticipates their semester hours until the day they can wear their Aggie Ring, with unparalleled pride, that will remain on their hand until they no longer breathe. It is a symbol, known by other Aggies anywhere, that you share something unique and it instantly creates a conversation via the Aggie Network. It is a silent signal to employers that you understand the core values upon which Texas A&M is founded: Respect, Integrity, Leadership, Loyalty, Excellence and Selfless Service, and they count Aggies among the best and most sought-after employees. Further, you will never be an ex-Aggie. Once an Aggie, you may become a Former Student, but you retain the distinction and honor of being an Aggie.

Texas A&M is a place where any human from any background can find belonging in the larger family of The 12th Man. From a welcoming “howdy” walking across campus to a shared commitment to volunteerism and service, the unmatched pride Aggies have in their identity is well-earned. When one Aggie is down, we all help them stand. This is the very definition of The 12th Man and the history informing why we stand at each game, symbolizing our willingness to step in if we are called to help. We yell loud and we support our team, whether winning or outscored, in the most intimidating football field in college football. We are not 2%-ers because that is Bad Bull and we are the Spirit of Aggieland. We are all in and we bleed maroon.

Only in a place where a Collie named Miss Reveille holds the highest rank in the Corps of Cadets and can choose to dismiss class or boot a cadet out of his own bed is a mascot so revered. She is a celebrity both on campus and off. Children, current students and Former Students line up for photo opportunities with Miss Rev. She has her own history and traditions that weave deeply into what make Aggieland so distinctive and special.

Once you begin to embrace and live the traditions and understand how each has its own unique meaning, you realize you will truly never be forgotten when Silver Taps or Aggie Muster sounds, honoring the lives of Aggies who have passed. Aggies always remain part of the Aggie Spirit and a part of what has contributed to the greatness of Texas A&M. When your name is one day called, other Aggies will say “Here” to symbolize no Aggie is truly forgotten or gone In Spirit.

The Aggie Spirit was on perfect display on October 9 when we played Alabama. Aggies stood the entire game from students to Former Students. Kyle Field was as it was meant to be, a

perfectly illuminated night game, filled to capacity with fans for both teams. Playing first ranked Alabama, A&M was the underdog. The 12th Man showed up and supported loud and proud. Several outlets reported a “hostile” environment, meaning the decibel level within Kyle Field created an incredible home team advantage for Texas A&M. Every single play had 12th Man support and every Aggie’s voice was hoarse by the end. It was an incredible and unbelievable hard fought win, breaking multiple Alabama records, and we celebrated with unbridled joy, dancing on the field. Every Aggie was a football fan during the game and the win belonged to every member of The 12th Man. In true Aggie fashion, interviews with team members afterward took no personal credit.

Being a part of the 12th Man is something no other school can match. It is absolute truth that from the inside you can’t explain it, from the outside you can’t understand. It is a family of Aggie Ring wearers worldwide that recognize one another and immediately ask “what year?” whether in Hong Kong, Australia or simply across the state.

We are the Aggies, the Aggies are We.