

Mullen touches lives as MSU football's 'Mom'

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At this year's Mississippi State University's Women's Football Clinic, Megan Mullen finally beat Dan.

In the past, the annual Women's Football Clinic would average about 100 avid female Bulldog fans. Typically, the clinic would be lead by the football coaching staff and include running drills and other football exercises.

"This year, we decided to 'chick it up,'" said Megan Mullen. "We did the exercises, held fashion shows and had so much fun."

Approximately 218 women signed up for this year's clinic, and it was hosted by Megan Mullen. She loved that more women participated in the clinic this year. And at her house, Megan was the one going to "football practice."

"It became a friendly competition between me and Dan," Megan Mullen said. "I finally beat Dan at something football."

She said it was also wonderful to see out how many people enthusiastically support the football program, through this clinic and throughout the community.

"People don't realize how serious we are when we say that," Megan Mullen said. "The support for the football program here is unlike anything we have experienced anywhere else in the country."

As the wife of the MSU head football coach, Megan sees the heart and the energy behind the scenes that goes into building a football program the players, the team, the university and the fans can be proud of each year. Coach Dan Mullen has always said his wife Megan plays a vital role in the football program, and she gives 100 percent to the effort.

"To succeed in the coaching profession is a family commitment," Dan Mullen said. "Megan is all in when it comes to her support of our football team. She acts like a mother to all of our players and is involved in their lives. She is always there to support them."

"Megan is a great asset to Mississippi State," said Athletic Director Scott Stricklin. "She's smart and talented in her own right, but the support she gives Dan and our football players, along with the wives of our football coaching staff, make her an invaluable part of our program."

Megan said she believes her life purpose right now is to love her family and to love and be good to the MSU football players on her husband's team.

"I try to make each of them feel special," Megan said. "People don't realize how demanding their lives are sometimes. I think I am supposed to love them, be good to them and make them smile."

And she is pretty good at it. Team members come to Megan when they need a hug, are homesick, have girlfriend problems or need someone to listen. Coach Mullen makes the team answer to Megan when they have academic issues or have problems getting to class on time. She tries to hug all of them as they come off the field.

"I love it," Megan said. "I wouldn't trade it for the world. I love them all a lot. I want them to know that someone cares for them. Some need it more than others."

When they get off the bus, she says something encouraging to each team member. Each comment is unique to the player and what they may be facing that particular day.

"For some, it may be their first SEC game and they are anxious about it," Megan said. "For another, they may have lost a grandparent that week. I really believe this is my calling. I see them every day and I know what they are going through."

Megan sees the team as an extension of their family. The Mullens say they have a 2-year-old son at home and they have 85 sons in college, playing football.

"The football players are so sweet, and they work so hard and they deserve to be loved so much," Megan said.

And their son also loves the team. The Mullens host a family dinner with the team once a week, and she said it is fun to see Canon sitting with the football players. Megan and Canon watch practice as much as possible to see dad and enjoy the team.

"There is nothing more rewarding or feels better in the world," Megan said. "They all play with Canon and you know that all the love you are giving, you are getting back. I want to help make their lives good while they are here, but they make mine just as good. That's pretty cool."

Megan said the "Canon Man" will be at the football games this year. He attended the Gator Bowl in Gainesville, Fla., last year and Megan couldn't help but enjoy how focused he was on the football game.

"During the first and second quarters, Canon wouldn't say a word," Megan said. "He was so focused. By the third and fourth quarters, he was singing the fight song."

Megan said the MSU community saw the highest of highs in the football program, but also the lowest of lows. Losing Nick Bell to cancer last year has been one of the hardest moments for the football team and for the Mullens.

"It is a sadness I can't get over," Megan said. "I remember the last time I hugged Nick. I remember the last time he got off the bus. I still can't get over it."

Working through that sadness as a team made the group stronger and made Megan even more committed making a difference in the lives of each football player.

"What we want to do is make people's lives better," Megan said. "And we are in a place, with the incredible support of the community and the state, we can build a program that makes a difference in the lives of these players."

When she is not busy providing support and encouragement for Coach Mullen and the football team, Megan is busy with 50 to 60 personal speaking engagements throughout the state to promote the program, and keeping up with Canon.

In what little spare time she has available, she and Dan dream of vacations.

"We love getting on the water, riding on a boat with the baby and getting away from it all," Megan said.

And despite her love for golf, she hasn't had much of a chance to play these days.

Megan was the captain of her high school golf team and her father owned a golf course. She graduated from Ohio University with a major in broadcast journalism and minors in sports and political science. After a brief internship with CNN Sports Illustrated, she was hooked on sports journalism.

After meeting and marrying Dan, the couple moved to Florida where she was offered a full time job as the main co-anchor for the nightly news show, Golf Central on the Golf Channel.

For now, the Mullens are focused on the upcoming football season. With just a few days before the season opener, the couple feels the program is headed in the right direction.

"We are a little more relaxed this year," Megan said. "We can breathe a little because the program feels that it is where it is supposed to be."

Megan is hoping for big quick wins.

"Everybody who has seen this team have commented on how physically fit they all are, thanks to the off season strength training program," Megan said. "They are ready to give it their best."

Regardless of what happens this season, for Megan, success is measured every day.

“It’s not every Saturday, but every single day,” Megan said. “We want to have a positive impact on their lives every day. We want to help them become better people. That’s success.”