



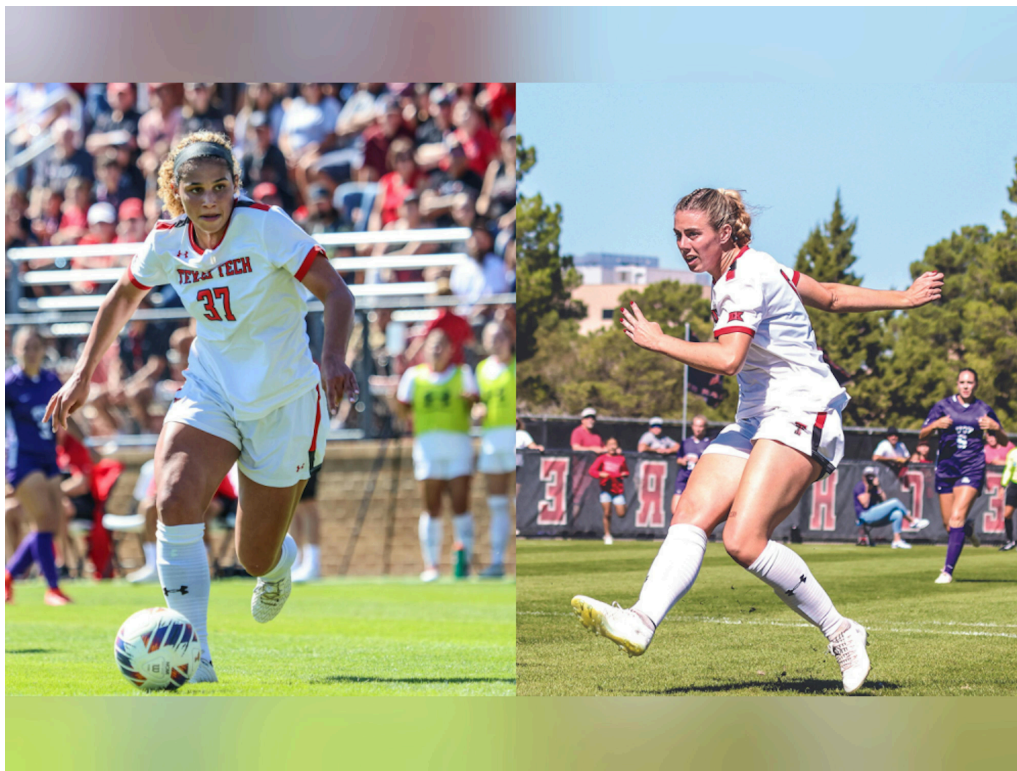
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SPORTS

Offensive duo pushes team forward



Junior forward Ashleigh Williams (left) dribbles down field, looking to score. Graduate forward Alex Kerr takes a shot on goal in a matchup between Texas Tech and Texas Christian University at John Walker Soccer Complex Oct. 8, 2023.

Photo by **Jacob Lujan**

AS By **Adam Sierra**
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With the regular season coming to an end, two Texas Tech soccer leading offensive players have comprised over half of the overall 40 goals.

Junior forward Ashleigh Williams and graduate forward Alex Kerr have greatly impacted the team, combining for 22 goals and boosting the Red Raiders to the No. 6 rank in the nation, tying the highest in program history. Tech also leads the Big 12 Conference in rankings, according to Tech Athletics.

"I think we're (Kerr and Williams) both just hungry. We just want more, and every time we're looking for that opportunity. We're never going to stop and put the gas on," said Kerr after beating the University of North Texas 6-1. "... We're just excited. We're gonna keep going every game."

Williams, an Allen native, began playing for the Red Raiders back in 2021. During her freshman season, Williams accounted for eight of the teams' goals, four of which were game winners and had her first career hat trick, according to Tech Athletics.

The following season, Williams recorded a team-leading nine goals, tallying three game winners and earned her first Big 12 player of the week. Williams was also named to the All-Big 12 second team, according to Tech Athletics.

"She's got a few different ways to score now than she had when she came in as a freshman and needed to happen a certain way. Sophomore a few different opportunities presented themselves," said Tom Stone, Tech's head soccer coach. "...So, her game has improved each and every year for the past three years and we're lucky to have her."

Being in her third year as a Red Raider, Williams has had her most productive year yet setting a career high in goals. The Allen native has recorded 12 goals, five of which were game winners and recorded her second hat trick of her career against Ball State. Williams was also named the Big 12 player of the week twice and the College Soccer National Player of the Week, according to Tech Athletics.

"I would describe her as dominant. She's obviously produced in the past, but like this year, she's so dominant," said graduate defender and captain Hannah Anderson. "... Obviously, she's a goal scoring machine too, so, I just feel like I said dominant in the field and like, just getting more and more comfortable about what she's doing."

Moreover, the Vanderbilt transfer Kerr has had a breakout year setting career highs for herself in her final season. The impact that the fifth-year senior has had on this team has improved Tech's offense compared to their previous three seasons.

"We felt we didn't score enough goals last year, so when the portal did its thing and Alex Kerr's name popped up on there, we jumped in with both feet," Stone said about the addition of Kerr. "... All these SEC teams wanted her, and we're like 'no, come to Texas, experience of a lifetime,' and we're so thankful that she did because you need numbers."

Kerr has been a solid addition to the team, recording 10 goals, two of which were game winners. Kerr also recorded her first hat trick off her career against UNT, according to Tech Athletics. In Kerr's four prior years at Vanderbilt, she only scored 12 times, making her 16 matches with Tech all the more impressive, according to Vanderbilt Athletics.

"I'm really appreciative of everyone on the field who helps me score those goals," Kerr said. "...I wanted to go out with a bang in my final season."



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wanted, and I'm really proud of everyone and just happy and excited for the road to come.”


With the addition of Kerr this season, opposing teams must account for both forwards as they're equally lethal in the box Stone said.


“She (Williams) likes pressure, but her responsibility has not gotten bigger. It's actually gotten smaller, because she can focus on being the box goal scorer that we need and back to goal nine that we need because Kerr is equally as dangerous and frightening to play against,” Stone said. “... So that twosome has really given both Alex and Ashleigh the freedom, I think, to be real comfortable in that setup.”


The two forwards have assisted the Red Raiders in recording the best regular season in program history as the team has never seen two goal scorers each with ten goals under their belt. Reflecting on their play, Stone said it's surreal to witness the season they've had so far.


“I mean they're just you know, they're in great sync. Their runs in the blocks are sharp and kind of threatening. They want to be dangerous and their hold up play has been good,” said Stone after Williams and Kerr combined for five goals in 6-1 over UNT. “... I think right now they've created a lot of ways to create issues for themselves or for you know, their teammates to score.”


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