

Alfred University softball team returns to national rankings

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A week after dropping out of the national poll, the Alfred University softball team has returned to the Division III rankings.

Following a successful Spring Break week in Arizona, in which AU went 10-2, the Saxons received five votes and are ranked 30th in the latest [National Fastpitch Coaches Association \(NFCA\) Division III poll](#), released Wednesday.

The Saxons received three poll votes and were ranked 31st in the preseason NFCA Division III rankings, released Jan. 28. The following two polls, AU received one vote and was ranked 32nd before earning no votes and dropping out of the poll March 11. The Saxons current spot in the national rankings is their highest since the team finished the 2014 season ranked 29th.

AU is idle until Friday, March 27, when the Saxons open Empire 8 Conference play with a 3 p.m. doubleheader against visiting Houghton. Alfred is hoping to build on the momentum of their 12 games in Tuscon, AZ, where the Saxons batted .409 and slugged .569 as a team while outscoring their opponents 96-37.

Senior pitcher/first baseman [Alison Wickwire](#) (Towanda, PA/Towanda) batted .351 with three homeruns, 13 RBIs and 10 runs scored and also went 3-1 with a 3.50 ERA and 35 strikeouts in four pitching starts. She and sophomore [Sophia Chiavatti](#) (Austin, CA/Foothills) (2-0, team-best 0.84 ERA) each tossed no-hitters on the Arizona trip. Chiavatti also batted .667 (10-for-15).

Junior shortstop [Nicole Maher](#) (Newark, DE/Caravel Academy) batted .300 (seven extra-base hits) with a team-leading 16 runs batted in. She and Wickwire were among four Saxons who finished the 12-game trip with at least 10 RBIs.

Junior second baseman [Dana Torchia](#) (Pompton Plains, NJ/Pequannock Twp.) hit .485 (team-high 16 hits) with 10 runs scored and 13 driven in, while sophomore outfielder [Hannah Lawrence](#) (Spencer, NY/Spencer-Van Etten) (five doubles, one HR) had 11 RBIs.

Senior outfielder [Alyson Hampton](#) (Oxnard, CA/Oxnard) batted .481 (13-for-27) with a team-best 12 runs scored. AU was a perfect 21-for-21 on stolen base attempts, with Hampton leading the Saxons with six thefts. Sophomore third baseman [Liz Thompson](#) (Horseheads, NY/Horseheads) batted .500 (15-for-30; team-best two triples) with 10 runs scored, eight drive in and four steals.

Junior outfielder [Samantha Jauregui](#) (Lindsay, CA/Lindsay) (seven RBIs) and junior catcher [Nora Passuite](#) (Lockport, NY/Lockport) each hit .462 (12-for-26) and scored 11 runs; junior [Mackenzie Miller](#) (Newport,

OR/Newport) hit .400 (triple, homerun) and scored nine runs; junior catcher [Jasmine Picini](#) (Alexandria, VA/**West Potomac**) batted .375 with three doubles and six RBIs; and senior [Samantha Jo Muller](#) (**Port Jervis, NY/Port Jervis**) went 6-for-14 (.429) and scored seven runs.

AU pitchers had a combined 2.75 ERA, striking out 69 and holding opponents to a .225 batting average. Three freshmen hurdlers contributed right away for the Saxons. [Kyra Nadzam](#) (**New Smyrna Beach, FL/New Smyrna Beach**) was 1-1 (two complete games) with a 1.50 ERA; [Kerri Keeler](#) (**Jamesville, NY/Jamesville-DeWitt**) was 2-0 with a 3.20 ERA; and **Shannon Shaefer** (**Westfield, NJ/Neptune**) was 2-0 with a 3.20 ERA and two saves.

The Saxons pitching success can be attributed in part to stellar defense. AU finished the Arizona trip with a .988 fielding percentage, making just four errors in 12 games.

After taking on Houghton March 27, the Saxons are on the road for four straight doubleheaders, including a pair of key Empire 8 matchups: March 28 at St. John Fisher and April 4 at Nazareth.