

AU men's lacrosse team looks for improvement across the board

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ALFRED The Alfred University men's lacrosse team's struggles through the 2003 season can't be traced to any one unit. Offense and defense each played well at times, and each had moments when they weren't up to par. Head coach Preston Chapman said the team must play better on both ends of the field in 2004 if AU is to improve on this year's 5-9 record. "Offensively, we were pretty good, but we knew going in that we were going to score goals," Chapman said. Indeed, Alfred possessed a potent attack, scoring 174 goals (12.4 per game). The trio of junior attackmen Dylan Macro (Camillus/West Genesee), Trevor Archer (Penn Yan/Penn Yan) and David Vail (Mt. Lakes, NJ/Mt. Lakes) each notched 50-point seasons. And junior midfielder Anthony Fiorelli (Endicott/Union-Endicott) and senior midfielder Steve Douglas (Horseheads/Horseheads) added a combined 53 goals. However, Saxon opponents scored an average of 14.1 goals per game, which Chapman attributed in part of a young and inexperienced defense and an offense that was at times inefficient. "Our offense scored goals, but we could have possessed the ball much better," he said. "We needed to take better shots, show more patience and recognize the opportunities we had, and we turned the ball over too often." Opposing teams spent too much time in Alfred's end of the field, putting pressure on an inexperienced defense which had a new goaltender and two new defenders in the starting lineup. "Our defense was inconsistent at times, but some of that starts with our offense," Chapman commented. Chapman looks for the defense to improve in 2004, in part because some young players will have gained a year of experience. In addition, defense and midfield have been the primary focus of the team's recruiting efforts. "Defense and goaltending will be our priority," Chapman said. "We will be more physical on defense next year." The Saxons lose four defenders to graduation, including four-year letterwinners Adam Jwaskiewics (Liverpool/Liverpool) and Jeff Podolak (Owasco/Skaneateles). Seniors Chris Sgouris (Marietta/Marcellus) and Pat Wayne (Skaneateles/Skaneateles) saw significant playing time for the first time this season. "Each of those guys, in terms of character and leadership, will be missed," Chapman said. "They're all quality young men who were hard working. They were great examples to our younger players." A trio of young defensemen - freshmen Tristan Hujer (Hamburg/St. Francis) and Matt Hall (Salt Lake City, UT/Judge Memorial) and sophomore Josh Parker (Hamburg/Hamburg) will have to step up their play and take on leadership roles in 2004. Hujer played well, seeing action in 14 games (starting 10) and leading the defense with 43 groundballs. Parker scooped up 24 loose balls from the long-stick midfield position. "Parker and Hujer will have to lead us next season," Chapman said. "They both gained valuable experience this year." In goal, sophomore Nicholas Hohman (Gibsonia, PA/Pine-Richland) was inserted into the starting lineup after seeing limited action as a freshman. His inexperience showed at times, but he also played well, particularly in close losses to nationally-ranked Ithaca and Hamilton and in victories over Oswego, Brockport and Utica. Backup Matt Jones (Waterloo/Waterloo) is lost to graduation. Chapman expects Hohman, freshman Chris Wszalek (West Seneca/West Seneca East, who missed this season with a back injury) and freshman recruits to compete for the starting goalie job in 2004. The Saxons will take their biggest hits at the midfield position. An already thin unit, Alfred loses three regulars to graduation. Missed most will be Douglas, who earned Empire 8 All-Conference honors both years at AU (honorable mention in 2002; First Team in 2003) after transferring from Alfred State College. A tenacious defensive player, he was among the conference's leaders in groundballs this season with 93. He was fifth on the team in goals with 24 and was the Saxons' top faceoff man, winning nearly 60 percent of his draws. "He's going to be very difficult to replace," Chapman said. "He played hard every game, from start to finish. His athleticism and physical presence are going to be missed." Also lost to graduation will be Greg Gascon (Buffalo/Bishop Timon) and Frank Radell (Henrietta/Rush-Henrietta). Gascon is a four-year letterwinner who was Alfred's sixth-leading scorer with 18 points (12 goals, six assists) despite missing the last three games with a nagging back injury. Radell was the Saxons' secondary faceoff man, winning 47 percent of his draws and finished the season with four goals and a pair of assists. "Greg played in pain all year. He really worked hard to become a complete midfielder," Chapman said. "Frank did a good job facing off and, offensively, was starting to come around." Fiorelli, an All-Conference honorable mention selection, and freshman Carlo DiRisio (Prattsburgh/Penn Yan) will lead the midfield next season. Fiorelli was tied for second in the team in goals with 29 and picked up 65 groundballs, also second on the team. DiRisio improved steadily throughout the year, finishing with eight goals, three assists and 35 groundballs. "We'll need (Fiorelli) to have 30-plus goals next year," said Chapman. "Carlo had a great freshman season. He's solid fundamentally." Juniors Angus Graham (Bethel, ME/Gould Academy) and Jared Tetz (Kennebunk, ME/Kennebunk) return to add depth to the midfield. The Saxons won't be lacking in talent at attack. Vail, a two time

all-conference selection (Second Team in 2002; First Team this season), Macro (an All-Empire 8 honorable mention selection the last two years) and Archer create an explosive offense. Vail already ranks fifth all-time in assists and points and 12th in goals at AU, while Macro ranks 11th in career goals. "Dylan, with his size, and David, with his quickness, provided matchup problems for most teams," Chapman said. Despite not being named to any of the all-conference teams, Archer (53 points on 29 goals and 24 assists) was probably the team's most consistent offensive performer. He was easily the most efficient shooter, with 36 percent of his shots finding the back of the net. "Trevor had an outstanding season - scoring, feeding, getting groundballs and running the offense," Chapman said. "Without a doubt he was the most consistent player on attack." Freshman Brad Frey (Cornwall, VT/Proctor Academy) played well in his first season, scoring seven goals in limited action. He'll be counted on to take on a greater role in the attack in 2004. "Brad made the most of his minutes. He'll see more time next season," Chapman commented. Also adding depth at attack next year, along with new recruits, will be freshmen Adam Griffin (New Hartford/New Hartford) and Sergio Ibarra (Buellton, CA/Midland). Chapman feels the returnees are determined to improve upon the 2003 season, which was disappointing given the team's solid 8-5 record the previous year. "It was disappointing and frustrating, knowing how close we are. We're three or four student-athletes away from being back in the ranks of the nation's best. We have a solid nucleus. We just need to add some depth."