

## AU men's basketball team uses hard work, enthusiasm to offset inexperience

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ALFRED Despite its youth and relative inexperience, the Alfred University men's basketball team, led by ninth-year head coach Jay Murphy, is optimistic as it prepares for the 2003-04 season. All five starters are gone from last year's team, which went 5-20 (2-12 Empire 8), but the core of this year's team saw significant minutes last season. Murphy is encouraged by his returnees, some of whom will have the opportunity to become leaders this year, as well as a group of newcomers who bring much-needed size. With no one player on the team expected to lead, the pressure on his young players will be limited. "We're inexperienced but not new to the system," Murphy said. "We will emphasize ball movement and shot sharing to take the game to our opponents. One night one guy will score and play a lot of minutes for us, and the next night it will be someone else. I'm really excited about the 11 guys we have. They're really close and will be a fun group to coach." The Saxons' lone player who had any starts last year is sophomore guard Chris Lemasters (Mansfield, PA/Mansfield). A team captain this season, Lemasters averaged 2.7 points and 1.4 assists per contest as a freshman. Murphy said Lemasters is an excellent ball handler and decision-maker and he is ready to step into a leadership role. "Chris has gotten much more vocal. Last year he was young and at times would hesitate to step up. This year he has matured and is poised to lead the team." Junior captains, 6-0 guard Eric Fleishman (Bath/Haverling) and 6-2 guard Bruce Nober (Lake Huntington/Narrowsburg), will be counted on to step up their play this season. Fleishman, came off the bench in 16 games and averaging 1.8 points in 2002-03, will be looked upon to motivate his teammates. Nober, a good ball handler, will need to make good decisions and lead by example. "Eric and Bruce room together and their cohesion is reflected on the court. Eric will have to use his aggressiveness in the paint and hit that short jumper when it's given to him," Murphy said. "And this is Bruce's year. He has to stay confident and use his athletic ability. They both have played really well in practice." Also expected to increase his role is 6-4 sophomore forward and captain Nick Andolina (Arkport/Arkport). "Nick is extremely quick and versatile and will create mismatches for our opponents," Murphy said. Next to Lemasters, Andolina has the most experience, averaging 10 minutes, 1.3 points, and 2.1 rebounds per outing in 2002-03. Other returnees expected to compete for playing time are 6-4 sophomore forward Ryan Hallett (Caledonia/Caledonia-Mumford), 6-4 junior forward Tate Williams (North Clarendon, VT/Mill River Union) and 5-10 sophomore guard Chad Winant (Hornell/Hornell). Hallett and Williams saw substantial time in reserve roles last year where they combined to record 5.2 points and 2.2 rebounds per game. Winant is a very strong perimeter player and a solid performer on the defensive end. "Hallett can run the floor and is beginning to drive to the basket more," Murphy commented. "Chad worked on his strength and has become very strong and Tate has become much more confident. Both have greatly improved their games." Murphy is excited about the team's newcomers and the much-needed size they'll contribute. Freshman guard/forward Ryan Clemenson (Ovid/South Seneca) is versatile and athletic, and at 6-4 can play any position on the floor. "Ryan will be one of the keys to our trap (defense) because he is very physical and can provide consistent pressure with his long arms," Murphy said. Freshman Jerry Nolan (Penn Yan/Penn Yan), a 6-3 guard/forward, is a strong young player who can play either on the perimeter or down in the post. "I can put Jerry anywhere and he will excel," Murphy said. Sophomore forward Jordan Snyder (Alfred Station/Alfred-Almond) joins the team after sitting out last season. The 6-5 Snyder will be looked upon to rebound and present a presence in the paint. Murphy is counting on 6-6 freshman forward Dillon Stein (North Huntingdon, PA/Norwin), a mobile big man with a solid jump shot, to contribute right away. "Dillon has great moves in the post and will be the key in the paint, while Jordan is our blue collar guy and will grow with every game," Murphy commented. Murphy said aside from inexperience, the team's main weakness may be its lack of depth. However, the team has worked hard at conditioning and should be able to offset the effects of a short bench. If the squad plays executes its trapping defense well, Murphy is confident the Saxons can win games. He said the Saxons' emphasis on defense is reflected in team goals, which include leading the opposition in steal/turnover ratio and leading the Empire 8 Conference in scoring defense. "We need to run a fast-paced transition game but stay under control," he said. "We will run the fast break when it is there but we must remain disciplined in our half-court set." "We have a group of guys with great character. If they all take ownership in the team and our concepts, and if we stay positive and learn from our mistakes, we'll win some games." --30--10-31-2003