

AU softball looks to chemistry and confidence as the keys to success

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ALFRED, NY - In only its third season under head coach Jamie McLaughlin, Alfred's softball program is poised to reach heights it had not seen since the 2000 season. "This is the best team chemistry I have seen since I have been here," said McLaughlin. With a dangerous blend of young talent and proven veterans, there is plenty of reason to believe AU will achieve success in 2004. The reason for the McLaughlin's optimism is due largely in part to the two seniors and captains, catcher Jaclyn Kreamer (South Dayton /Pine Valley) and centerfielder Jacque Krycia (Hamburg/Mt. Mercy). "My seniors are very strong leaders and have gone out of their way to help their young teammates develop," stated McLaughlin. Last season Kreamer hit .296. Her most valuable asset to the team is her defensive ability behind the plate. "She is a strength on the team and has been great with our young pitchers," said McLaughlin. Krycia returns to lead the outfield from her center field position. "Jacque is a solid player with excellent speed and always leads by example," stated McLaughlin. Leadership and team unity is a must, but for the Saxons to make a run toward the Empire 8 crown, they must have solid pitching and McLaughlin is confident in her pitching staff's ability to shut down opposing hitters. Sophomore captain Brittany Curran (Alfred/Alfred-Almond) is coming off a rookie campaign in which she led the team in wins and was on occasion virtually unhittable. Last year against St. John Fisher, she took a perfect game into the seventh inning but had to be pulled from the contest because of a substitution snafu in Alfred's home half of the sixth. She led the Lady Saxons in almost every pitching category last season, racking up 33 strikeouts. Splitting time on the hill with Curran will be junior Janelle Villone (Honeoye/Honeoye). Villone saw action in two games in 2003, recording six strikeouts. "I am excited about the experience we have on the mound and I think the variety is going to help us a lot this year," said McLaughlin. While the infield suffered some losses due to graduation, several key performers return and will be joined by some talented newcomers. Junior second baseman Andrea Crandall (Almond/Alfred-Almond) was solid in the field with a .980 fielding percentage. One of the team's speediest players, Crandall scored eight runs from the leadoff position. Also in the infield is sophomore Emilie Vicchio (Shaker Heights, OH/Shaker Heights) who batted .275 with 19 hits (second on the team). Rounding out the infield will be sophomore Ashley Morton (Belfast/Belfast) who will see time at first base, and freshmen Jennifer Close (Lodi /South Seneca) and Lauren Mastin (Springwater /Wayland-Cohocton). Freshman Gretchen Weidner (Eden/Eden) will be expected to contribute in the field as well as behind the plate. "All of my freshman are very talented and I am excited to see the many ways they will contribute," said McLaughlin. The Lady Saxons will feature both youth and experience in the outfield this season. Joining Krycia will be sophomore Adrienne Egglinger (Amityville/Amityville), who batted .300 while splitting time as a rightfielder and designated player. McLaughlin has high expectations for junior Courtney Briganti (Canisteo/Canisteo) who comes to AU after a fine two-year career at Alfred State. "They (Alfred State) play a very tough schedule and she was able to perform quite well and produce solid offensive numbers," stated McLaughlin. Also sharing time in the outfield will be sophomore Catherine Rieck (Walworth /Gananda). "Rieck is an athletic player that will help out all over the field," said McLaughlin. Rounding out the outfield will be freshman Tara Glynn (Scotia/Scotia-Glenville). McLaughlin is confident her squad has enough talent to show marked improvement over last season and compete for one of four spots in the conference tournament, the winner of which qualifies for the NCAA championships. "We are far more prepared mentally and physically this year than in any other season at this point, and if we stay healthy, I feel we can reach all of the goals that we have talked about as a team," exclaimed McLaughlin. "Our experience and chemistry will enable us to grow as a team, and all we need now is the confidence to know we can contend with anyone we face."