

AU men's lacrosse team gains experience, lays foundation for improvement in 2006

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ALFRED, NY The 2005 season was one of growing pains for the Alfred University men's lacrosse team. It was expected, considering that four of the team's top scorers from the previous season had been lost to graduation. A young team struggled to a 1-12 record this year, but gained valuable experience that could translate into considerable improvement in 2006 for head coach Preston Chapman's Saxons. AU came into the season having lost four of the team's top scorers from 2004. Attackmen Dylan Macro, David Vail and Trevor Archer, along with midfielder Anthony Fiorelli, had scored 114 of the team's 167 goals. Missing, too, would be the veteran leadership the four had provided. With only one senior on the roster defenseman Josh Parker (Hamburg, NY/Hamburg) AU's freshman- and sophomore-dominated squad struggled with youth and inexperience. The team lost its first 12 games before winning 8-7 in overtime at Oswego in the season finale. But the Saxons performed well late (playing Empire 8 champ Nazareth close for three periods and falling to conference foe Elmira 9-7 before knocking off Oswego) as the young players gained experience. The improvement bodes well as team looks to bounce back next season. The top returning scorer next season will be junior midfielder Carlo DiRisio (Prattsburgh, NY/Penn Yan). DiRisio, a team captain who scored the gamewinner against Oswego, finished 2005 with 22 points on 19 goals and three assists. Classmate and fellow midfielder Adam Griffin (New Hartford, NY/New Hartford) was close behind, with 17 goals and three assists. Junior midfielder Pete Ferriello (Nanuet, NY/Albertus Magnus) was the top face-off man for the Saxons, winning 49 percent of his draws while scoring two goals and grabbing a team-leading 71 groundballs. Classmate Tristan Hujer (Hamburg, NY/St. Francis), moved from defense, had a goal and three assists to go with 36 groundballs. A group of talented young midfielders played well as the season progressed. Sophomore Andy Aylward (Oswego, NY/Oswego) had two goals and two assists, and freshmen Ben Coburn (Liverpool, NY/Liverpool) and Tom Argentieri (Horseheads, NY/Horseheads) scored five and three goals, respectively, while freshman Brian Adams (Horseheads, NY/Horseheads) made a pair of starts and picked up seven groundballs. Each will be pivotal parts of what should be a strong and deep Saxons midfield next season. The Saxon attack came into the season as the unit with the least amount of depth and experience. Sophomore Jeff Andrews (Horseheads, NY/Horseheads) and junior Sergio Ibarra (Buellton, CA/Midland) showed they have the potential to be solid scorers. Andrews finished with nine goals and three assists and Ibarra added seven goals and one assist. Freshman Chris Smith (Buffalo, NY/Bishop Timon) had four goals and two assists before injury ended his season with three games left and sophomore Steve Roff (Liverpool, NY/Liverpool) tallied four goals. The Saxons' deepest and most experienced unit in 2005 was the defense. Parker, a four-year letterwinner and three-year starter had an outstanding senior season. He picked up 53 groundballs (second on the team), scored a pair of goals and was an Empire 8 Conference honorable mention all-star. Two other starters on defense James Powell (Corning, NY/Corning East) and Mike McCarthy (Kinnelon, NJ/Kinnelon) were sophomores. They finished with 35 and 34 groundballs, respectively. McCarthy added two of goals and an assist. A pair of young defensemen received valuable playing time in 2005 and will add depth to the team next year. Freshman Eric Thibault (West Seneca, NY/Bishop Timon) played in eight games (starting five) and had 17 groundballs before injuries ended his season. Sophomore Liam Ealahan (Tully, NY/Tully) made three late starts and finished with nine groundballs. The Alfred roster included five goalies, and each had a chance to make their mark. Sophomore Drew Foster (Pittsford, NY/Pittsford-Sutherland) was the choice at season's end, making a pair of starts. In four games played, Foster led the team in goals against average (8.27) and save percentage (.604). Looking ahead to next season, the AU faithful have reason to be optimistic, as nine of 10 starters and 23 of 25 letterwinners are set to return.