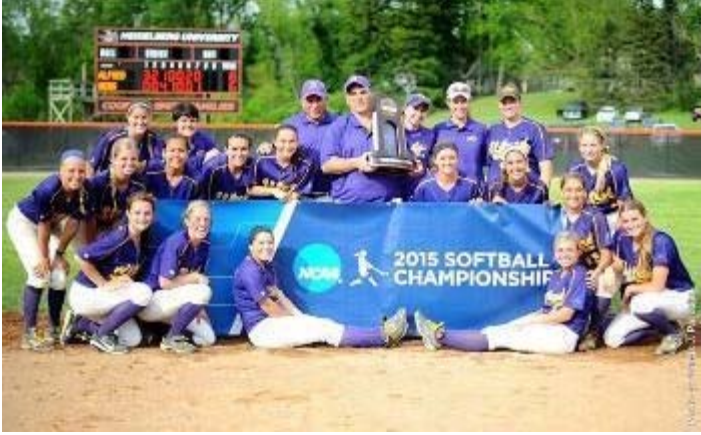


## Softball finishes year ninth in national poll

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The Alfred University softball team capped its historic 2015 season ranked in the top 10 nationally. The National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA) released its [final Division III poll](#) Monday and Alfred finished the year ranked ninth, by far the highest AU has finished in the final rankings.

The 2010 team was the only other Saxon squad to finish a season ranked; that team ended the year 25<sup>th</sup> after making the program's first-ever appearance in an NCAA tournament. Alfred had been ranked 15<sup>th</sup> in the last NFCA poll, released May 6 prior to the start of NCAA Regional play.

The 2015 AU softball team ended the year with a 40-7 record, with the 40 wins representing a new school single-season record. The previous mark was held by the 2010 team, which finished the year 37-8.

The 2015 campaign saw the Saxons reach historic new heights. The team went 13-1 in Empire 8 Conference play to claim the program's first-ever outright regular season title. AU then went on to win its first-ever conference championship tournament crown, earning the league's automatic bid to the NCAA championships.

Alfred hosted a regional tournament, and swept through it, beating Lebanon Valley before twice shutting out nationally-ranked Rowan. From there, the Saxons traveled to Tiffin, OH, for the Heidelberg College-hosted Super Regional. After dropping the opener of the best-of-three matchup, AU beat Heidelberg twice to punch the Saxons' first-ever ticket to the championship round in Salem, VA.

Alfred, which finished the year as the top-ranked team in the NCAA's Northeast regional rankings, had competed in the NAAs twice previously (in 2010 and 2014) but had never advanced past the regional round. AU dropped its only two games played in the championships in Virginia, but with only three seniors lost to graduation and a freshman class of 12 set to join the team in 2016, the Saxons are certainly poised to compete for a return trip to Salem.

2015 was a season for individual accolades as well. Sophomore third baseman [Liz Thompson \(Horseheads, NY/Horseheads\)](#) and senior utility [Alison Wickwire \(Towanda, PA/Towanda\)](#) were each named NFCA Second Team All-Americans.

Thompson, who batted .463 with 12 homeruns and 44 RBI and set new single-season records for hits (68), runs and runs (56), was named Empire 8 Player of the Year and was among five Saxons to earn First Team all-conference honors. Wickwire hit .372 with 52 RBI and broke the school record for homeruns (16). She also posted a 13-4 pitching record and struck out a team-best 108 batters.

Sophomore first baseman [Sophia Chiavatti \(Tustin, CA/Foothill\)](#), junior shortstop [Nicole Maher \(Newark,](#)

**DE/Caravel Academy**) and freshman outfielder [Shannon Schaefer](#) (**Westfield, NJ/Westfield**) were also named E8 First Team all-stars, while junior second baseman [Dana Torchia](#) (**Pompton Plains, NJ/Pequannock Twp.**) and freshman pitcher [Kerri Keeler](#) (**Jamesville, NY/Jamesville-DeWitt**) were Second Team selections.

Chiavatti hit a school-record 26 doubles (her .68 doubles per game led the nation) and paced the team with a .495 batting average while logging a perfect 1.000 fielding percentage. Maher batted .328 and drove in 39 runs and Schaefer hit .317 and also posted a 6-0 pitching mark. Keeler was 17-2 with a 1.96 ERA and Torchia hit .318 with 37 runs and 35 runs batted in.

Five Saxons were named NFCA Northeast Region all-stars. Thompson and Wickwire were First Team picks; Maher and Chiavatti were named to the Second Team; and Torchia was a Third Team selection.

Head Coach [Gino Olivieri](#) was named Empire 8 Coach of the Year for the third time in his 10-year career at AU. Olivieri, who also won the honor in 2008 and 2010, won his 250<sup>th</sup> career game at Alfred when the Saxons beat Ithaca during the Empire 8 championship tournament.

The Saxons will miss the leadership of its three seniors: Wickwire, starting centerfielder [Alyson Hampton](#) (**Oxnard, CA/Oxnard**), and reserve outfielder [Samantha Jo Muller](#) (**Port Jervis, NY/Port Jervis**). Wickwire leaves as the school's career leader in homeruns, doubles and walks and is second all-time in RBI, while Hampton (.357, 27 runs in 2015) is the school's career leader in runs.

But eight starters return. In addition to Keeler, Chiavatti, Torchia, Maher, Thompson and Schaefer, junior outfielder [Samantha Jauregui](#) (**Lindsay, CA/Lindsay**) and junior catcher/DP [Jasmine Picini](#) (**Alexandria, VA/West Potomac**) are set to return, as is junior catcher/DP [Nora Passuite](#) (**Lockport, NY/Lockport**).