

## AU swimming and diving teams loaded with depth and talent

10/18/05

ALFRED, NY Alfred University head swimming and diving coach Brian Striker has high expectations for his men's and women's teams in 2005-06. The men's team, due to some top returnees and exceptional freshmen, is the deepest and possibly the most talented he's had in four years as head coach at AU. The team's goal for a state title is a realistic one. The women's team, while inexperienced by comparison and not as deep, nonetheless has several talented veterans and some promising newcomers. Their enthusiasm and drive to succeed has Striker excited about the upcoming season. Despite a men's roster that numbers only 19 swimmers and divers, Striker said depth won't be a problem. "Our swimmers are very versatile and because of that this may be the deepest team I've coached," he said. "We should have a very good year." Leading the men's team are its tri-captains: seniors Alex Crowell (Wayland, MA/Wayland) and Brian Gotham (Syracuse, NY/Nottingham) and junior Brandon Striker (Caledonia, NY/York). Crowell and Striker are former All-Americans (each won national honors as part of relays teams in 2004) who are driven to make a return to the national meet. So, too, is Gotham, a state champ in the 100 and 200 breaststroke who, despite turning in NCAA cut times, has yet to qualify for nationals. "Alex and Brandon are very focused on getting back" to the NCAA meet "and (Gotham) really wants to get there," Striker said. The trio provides solid leadership for an otherwise young team and will be counted on to perform well during the dual meet season. Crowell, in particular, is a key member of the team. As the only freestyle sprinter with experience, he'll need to perform well and serve as a mentor to younger sprinters. Striker will be counted on to fill the void created by the graduation of butterfly standouts Kevin Martin and Bill Brown. Gotham, already the top breaststroker in the state, has worked hard to improve. Other returnees include three sophomores who enjoyed solid rookie campaigns last season. Page Beecher (Scarborough, ME/Scarborough) comes into this year in great shape and looks to dominate the individual medleys and distance freestyle events. Jon Wordingham (Prattsburgh, NY/Naples) is the team's best backstroker and has come in determined to improve not only his performance but also that of the medley relay teams. Dan Schumbmehl (Rochester, NY/Penfield) returns as the top diver and will be counted on to help the team in dual meets. Veterans who will be counted on to step up their performance include seniors Glen Jewell III (Ithaca, NY/Ithaca) (distance freestyle) and Jay Ferrio (Allentown, PA/Emmaus) (backstroke, freestyle), junior Trevor Covey (Alburt, VT/Burlington) (IM, freestyle) and sophomore Denis Eagan (Maplewood, NJ/St. Peter's) (IM, freestyle). They'll need to score well to help the Saxons at dual meets and at championships. Senior Pete Wachtel (Altamont, NY/Guilderland) is expected to join the team next semester and add depth to the diving corps. "They'll play a major roll in our success because of the depth they provide," Striker said of his returnees. The men's team has some solid freshmen, including Brian Agro (Gray, ME/Cheverus) and twin brothers Mark and Matthew Baker (Weedsport, NY/Weedsport). Agro is an accomplished breaststroker while the Bakers (Mark, freestyle; and Matthew, backstroke and IM) provide versatility. Other newcomers are freshmen Anthony Cantone (Ithaca, NY/Ithaca) (freestyle, butterfly), Kyle Lombardo (Mt. Morris, NY/Mt. Morris) (freestyle), Tyler Monroe (Conesus, NY/Livonia) (freestyle, backstroke), Scott Sarkissian (Oswego, NY/Oswego) (freestyle, butterfly) and sophomore Dan Staples (Wilbraham, MA) (breaststroke). The women's team will need swimmers who've played secondary roles in recent years to step up and perform well. "We have a very young team," Striker said. "But they've worked very hard to improve and we have very good leadership." The squad does have some proven veteran talent. Junior Erin Collins (Owego, NY/Owego) was one of the top divers in the Empire 8 Conference last year. She finished in the top-seven in both the 1-meter and 3-meter competitions at the state meet. Top returnees include seniors Tara Mungro (Rochester, NY/Wilson Magnet) (freestyle, breaststroke), Rachel Saroka (Groton, NY/Groton) (backstroke, butterfly, IM), Bonnie McDermott (Grand Island, NY/Mt. St. Mary) (breaststroke) and Kathleen Wittich (Pine Bush, NY/Pine Bush) (diving); juniors Zara Racz (Morristown, NY/Morristown) (freestyle), Jessica White (Palmyra, NY/Palmyra-Macedon) (freestyle) and Jamie Wingate (Groton, NY/Lansing) (diving); and sophomores Lindsay Scypta (Plymouth, MI/Cranbrook Kingswood) (freestyle, breaststroke) and Nikki Williams (Radford, VA/Radford) (freestyle, breaststroke). "If we want to do anything as a team, they're going to have to step up and win some events. They can't be content to finish second, third and fourth," Striker said. Veterans who add depth to the team include junior Caley Borglum (Rushville, NY/Marcus Whitman) (freestyle) and Cassandra Clark (Eden, NY/Springville-Griffith) (freestyle) and sophomores Kim Covino (Derby, NY/Lake Shore) (breaststroke), Mary Hodock (Palmyra, NY/Palmyra-Macedon) (freestyle), Alyssa Ketcham (Salt Point, NY/Franklin D. Roosevelt) (breaststroke, butterfly) and Jessica Zekus (Tuscon, AZ/Canyon Del Oro) (freestyle, backstroke). "These are girls who've scored for us in the past and we'll need

them to continue that this year," Striker said. Top newcomers to the women's team include freshmen Jessie Caccamo (Ballston Lake, NY/Shenendehowa) (freestyle), Kayln Follmer (Windfield, PA/ Lewisburg Area ) (freestyle, butterfly) and Brynja Seagren (Bradford, PA/ Bradford) (diving). "(Caccamo) is a solid distance freestyler and Follmer is a sprinter and butterflyer who provides us with the versatility we need," Striker said. Seagren "has shown a lot of potential." Other newcomers counted on to provide depth are freshmen Leigh Miller (Alfred Station, NY/Alfred-Almond) (freestyle, backstroke) and Anne Sheehy (Staatsburg, NY/Franklin D. Roosevelt) (freestyle, breaststroke). "We need them to take the next step," Striker said of the women's team. "They have incredible drive and desire. The potential is there for a successful season."