

AU football team whips Ithaca, 31-7

10/06/12



ALFRED, NY — In a game in which defense was expected to play a leading role, only Alfred University held up its end of the bargain in a 31-7 dismantling of visiting Ithaca on Homecoming Saturday afternoon at Merrill Field.

Ithaca came into the game unbeaten, with one of the top-rated defenses in the country, allowing only 272 yards of offense per game, including a mere 98 on the ground. The Bombers were among the nation's leaders in tackles for loss, with 8.3 per game.

On Saturday, Ithaca (4-1, 2-1 Empire 8) allowed 326 yards of offense to the Saxons, including 189 to a Saxon team that came in averaging 238 yard on the ground per contest. Junior running back **Chuck Beckwith (Victor, NY/Victor)**, coming off a career-high 177-yard rushing performance at Buff State two weekends ago, ran for 131 yards and two touchdowns on 25 carries. He got the bulk of the work as starting junior tailback **Austin Dwyer (Hornell, NY/Hornell)** was lost to injury in the first quarter.

The Saxons (3-1, 2-0 Empire 8) offensive line was solid, allowing the Bombers to make only two tackles behind the line of scrimmage Saturday, with no sacks allowed (the Bombers were fourth in the nation in sacks, with 4.3 per game).

AU's defense, on the other hand, was dominant. Alfred came in giving up just over 300 yards per game, including 110 rushing; against Ithaca, the Saxons allowed only 74 first-half yard of offense as the Saxons jumped to a 24-7 lead at the break. Ithaca, averaging 413 yards of offense per game coming in, including 195 on the ground, finished with only 143 yards of offense, including a scant four yards rushing, as the AU defense registered 14 tackles for loss. Bomber tailback **Clay Ardoine**, the nation's 16th-leading rusher with 134 yards per game, had 32 yards on 11 carries. The AU defense harassed Ithaca quarterback **Phil Neumann** into a 16-for-38 day with 139 yards and an interception. The Saxons sacked Neumann eight times, with senior tackle **Mike Raplee (Dundee, NY/Dundee)** earning 4 ½ sacks and another tackle for loss. Ithaca came in allowing only .67 per game.

Neither team scored in the opening quarter as each exchanged punts on their first two possessions, then turned the ball

over on ensuing drives Alfred on an interception at the Ithaca 47 and the Bombers on downs at the Alfred 34. The Saxons got on the board on their first second-quarter possession, with senior wideout **David Lee Tack (Newark, NY/Newark)** taking a lateral pass from junior quarterback **Zach Sopak (Falconer, NY/Southwestern)** and lofting a 46-yard pass down the right sideline to a wide open junior wideout **Josh Phillips (Syracuse, NY/West Genesee)** to cap a six-play 66-yard drive and give AU a 7-0 lead 13 seconds into the quarter.

After Ithaca punted on its ensuing possession, the Saxons marched 86 yards in 14 plays over 6:40 with Beckwith bulling his way into the endzone from three yards out. AU senior free safety **Jon Jackson (East Amherst/Bishop Timon)** intercepted Neumann at the Ithaca 30-yard line on the Bombers' next possession and four plays later, Beckwith scored on a one-yard run and the Saxons led 21-0 with 2:30 left in the half.

Ithaca got on the board with 44 seconds left in the half after the Bombers recovered a fumbled punt at the Saxons' 36-yard line and scored a touchdown eight plays later. AU answered, however, as freshman wide receiver **Maleke Fuentes (Olean, NY/Olean)** took the ensuing kickoff 62 yards to the Ithaca 28-yard line. Four plays later, junior kicker **Cody Gustin (Wellsville, NY/Wellsville)** booted a 35-yard field goal as first-half clock expired, putting Alfred up 24-7.

Alfred scored its final points of the game with 4:37 left in the third, cashing in again on an Ithaca turnover. Neumann fumbled after a Raplee sack and AU recovered at the Bomber 30. Sopak found senior tight end **Adam Schutz (Geneva, NY/Geneva)** from three yards out to cap an eight play drive.

Raplee finished with eight tackles (five solo) and a forced fumble and senior end **Chris Steeves (Rochester, NY/Gates-Chili)** had six tackles, including 2 ½ sacks. Senior strong safety **Reggie Pressley (Rochester, NY/Gates-Chili)** had a team-leading 11 tackles, including a sack and Jackson finished eight tackles. Sophomore linebacker **J.R. Britton (Rochester, NY/Greece Arcadia)** and sophomore tackle **Willie Parker (Livingston Manor, NY/Livingston Manor)** each had six tackles.

Sopak finished 13-of-28 for 97 yards passing and Schutz had five catches for 38 yards and a TD. Phillips had four catches for 74 yards and a score. Gustin, making his first career start, made all four extra point tries and his lone field goal attempt.

Joel Lynch (47 receiving yards) and **Joseph Ingrao** (29 yards) each had three catches to lead Ithaca. **Chris Williams** had 12 tackles and **Skyler Schlenker** (one tackle for loss) and **Tom Scanlon** each had 10 tackles to lead the Bomber defense.

AU is in action next on Saturday, Oct. 13, at 1 p.m. at home against Empire 8 rival St. John Fisher.