

Alfred University men's soccer team enjoys another solid season

11/11/04

ALFRED The Alfred University men's soccer team finished the 2004 season with a 10-6-2 record overall (4-2-0 Empire 8), earning bids to play in two postseason tournaments. While the team will lose several key performers to graduation, a solid group will return in 2005. The Saxons earned the third seed in the Empire 8 tournament and the fifth seed in the ECAC Upstate Championship tournament. AU faced conference rival St. John Fisher in the first round of each tournament, dropping a 4-3 decision in the Empire 8 championships before playing the Cardinals to a scoreless double-overtime tie in the ECACs (Fisher advanced after a 6-5 penalty kick shootout win). Sophomores Jarett Sanatar (Great Neck, NY/Great Neck North) and Bobby Linaberry (Manlius, NY/Fayetteville-Manlius) led a tough AU offense, finishing the season atop the Empire 8 in points, ranking one and two, respectively. Sanatar, who also led the Empire 8 in goals, had an outstanding year for AU finishing with 24 points on 12 goals. Linaberry ended the season with 23 points on nine goals and five assists. First Team selections Sanatar and Linaberry were among eight Saxons to receive Empire 8 all-Conference honors. Freshman Adam Long (Bath/Haverling) and senior midfielder Brian Donahoe (Elmira/Elmira Free Academy) earned Second Team all-conference honors. Long played well in his first season, tallying six goals and three assists. Donahoe was a starter and captain for the Saxons and concluded the season with nine points on three goals and two assists. Donahoe ends his AU career with 16 career points on six goals and four assists. Also earning Second Team honors were senior defenseman Randy Clukey (Bath, ME/Morse) and sophomore goalie Brian Middleton (Baldwinsville/C.W. Baker). Cluckey started in 17 games and anchored a defense that held opponents to 75 shots on goal for the season. Middleton ended the year with an 8-4-0 record with three shutouts. He had a .710 save percentage and a 1.34 goals against average. AU head coach Scott Miller believes the solid defensive play by of the backs and goalies along with the attitude the players have carried this season have been big factors in the team's success. "We have made ourselves a more dangerous team through the team defense we apply in the final third of the field," Miller said. "A lot of credit goes to the guys who have adapted well to a new system. They have understood the importance of making decisions that are best for the team and this unselfishness has made them better players." Senior midfielder Keith Phelan (Baldwin/Baldwin) had five goals and two assists to close out a stellar AU career (50 points on 20 goals and 10 assists). He received honorable mention from the conference, as did junior defender Adam Morgan (Byron/Byron-Bergen), who finished the season with one goal and one assist. While the Saxon defense will be hurt by the losses of Clukey and fellow senior Stephen Robin (Foster, RI/Ponaganset), the back line returns Morgan, junior Alex Carp (Clinton, CT/Morgan), a starter, and sophomore Zach Wise (Eliot, ME/Marshwood), a key defensive reserve. Other key performers returning in 2005 include sophomore midfielders Zach Hunkele (Elmira, NY/Elmira Free Academy), three goals and three assists in 2004, and Brian Piccardo (Aspinwall, PA/Fox Chapel). The Saxons' accomplishments have instilled high expectations for next season. "We solidified a spot in the conference tournament early in October with a win against Nazareth College," Miller said. "We dropped only one home game all year and we were ranked regionally the last eight weeks of the season. I anticipate that we can build on this success next year with another 10-win season and a higher seed in the conference (tournament)." This year's ECAC bid marks the first time Alfred University has been a part of the tournament since 1990. Miller credits this accomplishment along with the rest of the team's success not only to his players but also to former head coach Ken Hassler (who left AU after the 2003 season) and assistant coach Scott Wallace.