

## **Alfred University football camp continues record of attendance growth**

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ALFRED The fifth annual Summer Football Camp at Alfred University is being held this week and for the fourth straight year has increased overall attendance. Almost 200 youngsters from six high schools are at this week's camp, which began Sunday, July 21, and concludes Thursday, July 25. The 196 students represent an increase of 71 campers over the record 125 who attended in 2001. "I knew it was going to grow," AU head football coach Dave Murray commented. "But I didn't think it would get this big this fast." Murray held his first camp in the summer of 1998, just before his first season at the helm of the Saxon football program. That year, one high school, Raritan (NJ) High, attended, bringing 24 players. In 1999, Victor High School (near Rochester) and Maple Grove High School (near Jamestown) began sending players and attendance jumped to 78. Those three schools were joined by the Aquinas Institute (Rochester area) in 2000 to boost attendance to 118. Last year Raritan, Victor, Maple Grove and Cassadaga Valley High School (Fredonia area) combined to bring 125 campers. Those four schools are joined this year by West Genesee High School (Syracuse area) and Otto-Eldred (PA) High School. West Genesee brought 49 campers; Victor, 42; Raritan, 35; Maple Grove, 31; Cassadaga Valley, 27, and Otto-Eldred, 12. The camp is attractive primarily because it stresses team concepts. Because high school teams, rather than individuals, are invited, squads have the opportunity to start working together earlier than if they waited for their normal preseason to begin in August. Moreover, Murray pointed out, each team benefits from working out and scrimmaging with other quality high school programs. "There is some tremendous talent out here. It gives the kids a chance to compete against some really great players," Murray said. A small school like Maple Grove, a perennial power in the New York State Class D ranks, benefits from playing against much larger schools during the camp at AU. "That can only better prepare them and make them stronger when their season starts," Murray said schools attending the camp get a head start not only on competition with other teams and learning their plays, but also in building camaraderie among each team.