

AU men's soccer team prepares to build on 2012

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ALFRED, NY —Alfred University head men's soccer coach Scott Miller says he's always excited to begin a new season, and this year is no different, especially with a host of solid veterans returning, joined by several talented newcomers.

"It's always fun to start a new season with a new group of guys and a new group of goals," says Miller, entering his 10th season leading the Saxons.

AU enters this season following a 2012 campaign when the Saxons went 6-12 (1-5 Empire 8 Conference). The 2013 season begins at the Oswego Tournament Aug. 30 (vs. SUNY Morrisville) and 31 (vs. SUNY Oswego); both games start at 3 p.m. The Saxons will host Pitt-Bradford in their home opener on Tuesday, Sept. 4 at 7 p.m.

Miller said he likes his roster's potential, which consists of 13 new players and 17 returning players. He said the team's camaraderie is its biggest strength.

"It's a fantastic group of guys," Miller commented. "We have a very creative group of players. They have a great sense of purpose and they're very tight as a group. The guys understand each other."

Miller said the team has two primary objectives it will strive for this season: allowing fewer goals and reaching the four-team Empire 8 Conference Tournament, the winner of which gets the league's automatic bid to the NCAA championships. Last season, the Saxons allowed 44 goals (23 in six Empire 8 games). AU hasn't reached the postseason since 2006, Miller's second trip to the Empire 8 tournament.

Miller said several players are keys to the team's success this season. Senior midfielder/forward Jeff Thomas

(Canandaigua, NY/Canandaigua) returns after a six-goal, two-assist season that earned him Second Team All-Empire 8 honors in 2012. Miller added that sophomore midfielder/forward Ian St. Pierre (Ann Arbor, MI/Dexter) will also contribute to the team's goal scoring and that senior defender Uriah Kashmann-Myrow (Warwick, NY/Warwick Valley) and sophomore midfielder Omar Mohamed (Rochester, NY/Edison) will be counted on to provide strong leadership.

Four goalkeepers seniors Sam Guy (Binghamton, NY/Binghamton) and Jacob Bird (Auburn, NY/Skaneateles), sophomore Matthew Unick (Warwick, NY/Warwick Valley) and freshman Eric Witkowski (LeRoy, NY/LeRoy) will compete for time in net. Bird saw the lion's share of time in goal last season, starting 11 games and making a team-high 46 saves while tallying three shutouts. Unick and Guy started three and two games, respectively, and combined for 25 saves.

Other returnees who saw significant time last year include junior midfielder/defender Nicholas Milliman (Randolph, NY/Randolph) (15 starts, one goal), junior forward Brendan Collins (Tompkins Cove, NY/St. Thomas More) (nine starts, one goal), sophomore midfielder/forward Greg Buisman (Honeoye Falls, NY/Honeoye Falls-Lima) (17 games, two assists), sophomore forward Nick Carey (Middletown, NY/Minisink Valley) (17 games, two goals), and sophomore defender Kevin Powers (Syracuse, NY/Cicero-North Syracuse) (10 starts).

Miller has high expectations for his new players, including freshmen midfielders Rich Lander (Narrowsburg, NY/Sullivan West) and Graeme Corrigan (Troy, NY/Troy) and freshman midfielder-defender Oumar Soumohoro (New York, NY/Martin Luther King).

"Our offense will be strong," says Miller. "Jeff Thomas, Omar Mohamed, Richard Lander and Graeme Corrigan will help a lot in that department. Oumar Soumohoro and Uriah Kashmann-Myrow are will anchor our defensive line."

Miller is confident his team will be competitive with every opponent, including those in the tough Empire 8 Conference. "I think technically we'll be as good if not better than the teams we face," he said. "Every game is going to present different challenges," says Miller. "We need to look towards the challenges of each game. No game will be the same. We have to keep the right mental attitude."