

AU softball team whips King's in opening game at NCAA Regional

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ITHACA, NY - The Alfred University softball team broke open a scoreless game with sixth runs in the fifth inning en route to a 9-1 six-inning victory over King's College in the first round of the NCAA Regional at Ithaca College Thursday afternoon. Sophomore third baseman Molly Shepherd (Camillus, NY/West Genesee) and senior shortstop Jesika LeBarron (Campbell, NY/Corning West) hit back-to-back homeruns in Alfred's sixth. Shepherd's blast came with two runners on and LeBarron followed with a solo shot to put Alfred up 6-0. King's scored a run in the top of the sixth and the Saxons answered with three in the bottom of the inning, giving AU an eight-run lead and ending the contest. With the victory AU, the fourth-seeded team in the regional, improved to 35-6. Sophomore pitcher Nicole Hedrick (Albany, NY/Catholic Central) was solid, allowing one run on four hits and striking out five to improve to 18-3 on the season and tie the AU single-season record for pitching wins. Hedrick and King's starter Lindsey Hoerner matched scoreless frames until the bottom of the fifth. AU sophomore outfielder Angela Netta (Rahway, NJ/Mother Seton Regional) led off with a walk and advanced to second on a single by freshman designated player Hana Gross (Union, NJ/Union). Senior centerfielder Shannon Mather (Endicott, NY/Union-Endicott) reached on an error on a sacrificed bunt attempt, with Netta scoring on the play to give AU a 1-0 lead. Hedrick singled to score Gross before Shepherd hit her third homerun of the year. LeBarron followed with her fifth homerun to put the Saxons up 6-0. All six AU runs came with no outs. King's scored its lone run of the game when shortstop Meaghan Galvin walked to open the sixth, moved to third and scored on a balk with two outs. Alfred put the game away in the bottom of the inning. Gross hit a one-out double and junior pinch runner Chelsey Cary (Corfu, NY/Pembroke) scored on Mather's RBI single. Hedrick singled Mather to second and both stole to put runners on second and third. Shepherd walked to load the bases and Mather scored on a passed ball to make it 8-1. LeBarron then singled to score Hedrick with the winning run. Hedrick finished 2-for-4 with an RBI and two runs scored and Shepherd had three hits in four at-bats, drove in three and scored a run to lead Alfred. LeBarron was 2-for-4 with a run scored and two driven in; Gross had three hits in three at-bats; and Mather scored a pair of runs. Galvin had a hit and scored a run and third baseman Grethen Tholen hit a double for King's (22-17), the tournament's fifth seed. Hoerner allowed six runs (five earned) on six hits and struck out two in five innings. Annie Erndl allowed three runs (two earned) on four hits in one-third inning of work. Alfred moves on to take on top-seeded Cortland a 7-1 winner over eighth-seeded Keuka on Thursday at 2 p.m. Friday in Game 7 of the double-elimination tournament. King's and Keuka meet in an elimination game at 10 a.m. Friday. The winner of the eight-team regional tournament advances to play in the NCAA Division III championship tournament, May 21-25 at Wisconsin-Eau Claire.