

## **Saxons rally to claim overtime win over Rochester in ECAC Northwest Bowl**

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ALFRED, NY The Alfred University football team rallied from 15 points down to tie Rochester in the closing seconds of regulation in the ECAC Northwest Bowl Championship. After Rochester missed a field goal try on its first possession in overtime, the Saxons scored on their first play from scrimmage in the extra session to walk away with an 40-34 win Saturday afternoon at Merrill Field. Rochester (7-4, 4-2 Liberty League) held a 34-26 lead when AU took possession at its own 15-yard line after a Yellowjacket punt with just over two minutes remaining in regulation. Junior quarterback Paul Keeley (Caledonia, NY/Caledonia-Mumford) led the Saxons on a 12-play 85-yard drive, which ended with his one-yard sneak into the endzone with 14 seconds remaining. Down 34-32, Keeley completed the comeback with a bootleg run to the right for the two-point conversion. After Griffin Moar came up short on a 41-yard field goal try on Rochester's opening overtime possession. AU ended things. Starting at the Rochester 25-yard line, freshman tailback Vinson Hendrix (Rochester, NY/East) ran left, breaking two tackles on his way to the endzone and the winning touchdown. It was Alfred's third ECAC Bowl championship in as many years. Keeley was named the game's Most Outstanding Player for a second straight year. He shook off two turnovers (one interception and a fumble) to throw for 279 yards and a score, leading the Saxons on touchdown drives in three of their last four possessions in regulation. The Saxons (8-3, 4-2 Empire 8) played from behind most of the game, their only lead in regulation coming after a 25-yard field goal by junior placekicker Chris Reynolds (Pittsford, NY/Pittsford-Sutherland). Rochester answered on its first possession of the second quarter, when quarterback Aaron Molisani connected with wideout Jay Jay Vanderstyn on a 13-yard TD with 9:14 left in the second. The extra point was blocked and AU sophomore strong safety Dan Medlock (Garden City Park, NY/Mineola) returned the ball 80 yards for a two-point score. On Alfred's next possession, Rochester strong safety Matt Stack intercepted Keeley at the Yellowjacket 45-yard line and returned the ball 55-yards for a score, putting the visitors up 13-5. The Saxons scored two possessions later when junior defensive tackle Don Miller (LeRoy, NY/LeRoy) ran in from three yards out to cap an eight-play, 56-yard drive. The two-point conversion attempt failed and Rochester led, 13-11. Rochester scored on three straight possessions in the third, with a pair of Matt Bielecki touchdown runs sandwiched round a 50-yard pass from Molisani to wide receiver Mike Coolbaugh to take a 34-19 lead into the final stanza. Alfred's lone score in the third came on a five-yard scoring run from Hendrix, which capped a five-play 48-yard drive. After Bielecki's second TD run, AU drove 78 yards in seven plays, with Keeley connecting with freshman wide receiver Jared Manzer (Johnson City, NY/Johnson City) on a 25-yard scoring pass with 13:31 left in regulation. It was Manzer's 10th touchdown reception of the year, which breaks the AU single-season record he had shared with two others. Rochester punted on its ensuing possession but got the ball back when AU turned it over on downs with 3:28 left. The Saxons got one last chance, forcing Rochester to punt and setting up Keeley's late heroics. Both team's offenses were evenly matched. Rochester outgained AU in total offense, 349-321 and held a 23-21 edge in first downs. The Yellowjacket defense was tough against the run, holding the Saxons to 42 yards rushing on 24 attempts. Bielecki had an outstanding game for Rochester, rushing 36 times for a game-high 128 yards and a pair of scores. Molisani completed 21 of 31 passes for 239 yards and two touchdowns. Vanderstyn caught a game-high eight passes for 64 yards and wide receiver Zach Ingoldsby caught four passes for 53 yards. Manzer and freshman wide receiver Saucobie Riley (Rochester, NY/Marshall) each caught five passes for 54 and 52 yards, respectively. Junior tight end Matt Gibbins (Clifton Park, NY/Shenendehowa) caught seven passes for a game-high 75 yards. Hendrix finished with a team-high 56 yards rushing on 13 carries to go with his two touchdown runs. Freshman linebacker Chad Pieri (Caledonia, NY/LeRoy) paced the Saxons defense with a game-high 13 tackles (eight solo, 2.5 for loss) and a sack. Freshman cornerback Brent McGill (Rochester, NY/East), making his first career start, had 12 tackles and a fumble recovery, while senior middle linebacker Nick Gatto (Bemus Point, NY/Maple Grove) had 11 tackles. Senior end Andy Rantz (Montandon, PA/Milton) wrapped up a stellar career at AU with seven tackles, including two for loss and a sack. Miller added four tackles and a sack and Medlock notched his team-leading fourth interception. Linebacker Richi Canale paced the Rochester defense with five tackles (three solo), including three for loss and two sacks, and forced a fumble. Cornerback Andy Rape had six tackles (five solo) and end Pat Gallagher added five tackles (four solo), including two for loss and a sack.