

Red-hot Saxons set to begin Empire 8 Conference play

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ALFRED, NY The Alfred University softball team is off to the best start in the program's 16-year history, its record a perfect 14-0 as the Saxons prepare for their Empire 8 Conference opening games this weekend at Nazareth. AU has been solid in virtually every phase of the game. The team batting average is .418 and the pitching staff has a collective earned run average of 1.84. Opponents are batting .175 and have a collective ERA of 14.35. Alfred's fielding percentage is a solid .971 and the Saxons have outscored opponents 167-53. Now the tough part begins. The Empire 8 is one of the top conferences in Division III and the league slate always presents a challenge. AU will be put to the test Saturday with 1 p.m. doubleheader at Nazareth. That will be followed by a pair of home doubleheaders next weekend: Saturday, April 4 at 1 p.m. against powerhouse Ithaca and Sunday, April 5, at 1 p.m. against Utica. Following a perfect 12-0 Spring Break trip to Cocoa Beach, FL, and Alfred's doubleheader sweep of host Pitt-Bradford on Wednesday, the Saxons have momentum on their side. Several players have been off to torrid starts, both at the plate and in the pitcher's circle. Junior third baseman Jesika LeBarron (Campbell, NY/Corning West) had 31 RBIs in Florida and two more Wednesday, putting her one off the school single-season record of 34, set last year by then-freshman first baseman Ashley Passaro (Long Beach, NY/Long Beach). LeBarron now has 72 RBIs and 10 homeruns for her career, both school records. She is hitting .604 with a .611 on-base percentage and has a team-leading .958 slugging percentage. Junior second baseman Karen Folts (Penn Yan, NY/Penn Yan) had a doubleheader to remember at Pitt-Bradford Wednesday, going a combined 6-for-8 with four homeruns and a double, 11 RBIs and four runs scored. Her three homers and eight RBIs in the second game of the twinbill established new school single-game records. With 70 career RBIs, Folts sits two behind LeBarron for the school career record. Her .800 slugging percentage is tied for third on the team. Junior shortstop Samantha Rollins (Hornell, NY/Hornell) has been as good as advertised. A two-time junior college All-American and 2008 junior college Player of the Year at Monroe Community College, Rollins is batting .500, slugging .813 and has driven in 21 runs, second on the team. Junior centerfielder Jessica Figallo (Ridgewood, NJ/Ridgewood) has been outstanding hitting from the leadoff spot. She leads the team with a .650 batting average and .673 on-base percentage and is slugging .800, tied for third. Figallo has 26 hits and 19 runs scored, both second on the team, and is the stolen base leader with seven. Junior utility player Jordan Siefer (Sylvania, OH/Sylvania Southview) has been a run-scoring machine throughout her career at AU. She scored 29 times each of her first two years, establishing single-season records, and appears poised to shatter that mark with 21 runs scored thus far this season. She's batting .429 and her 20 RBIs are third on the team. Junior leftfielder Shannon Mather (Endicott, NY/Union-Endicott) has had a tremendous year hitting out of the ninth spot. Her .536 batting average and .581 on-base percentage both rank third on the team and she is slugging .714 with 11 runs scored and eight driven in. Sophomore Chelsey Cary (Corfu, NY/Pembroke) has been the ace of the pitching staff. She is 7-0 with three shutouts and an earned run average of 0.76. Cary has 45 strikeouts (including 20 in one two-game stretch in Florida) and has held opponents to a .107 batting average. Freshman Nicole Hedrick (Albany, NY/Catholic Central) is 3-0 with a 2.81 ERA and 18 strikeouts. Freshman Sarah Scanlon (Mishawaka, IN/Mishawaka), pitching in a relief role thus far, has gone 1-0 with a 0.84 ERA and 17 strikeouts; freshmen Claire Bennett (Mumford, NY/Caledonia-Mumford) and Molly Shepherd (Camillus, NY/West Genesee) are each 1-0, with respective ERAs of 0.93 and 1.93.