

Lady Saxons feel chemistry is the key to success

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ALFRED With the start of the 2003 season upon them, the Alfred University women's soccer team is hoping the knowledge gained from another year of experience will help them reach the next level. After a discouraging 2002 season, the Lady Saxons are planning on using the growing pains to catapult them into contention in the Empire 8. "Experience is one thing that we have and it is showing in the chemistry and connection between the players," said coach Jamie McLaughlin. "There are 12 girls returning from 2002, and I am excited about the 10 newcomers, some of which will see a lot of time." Last year AU finished with a 3-13-1 record, 0-7 in Empire 8 Conference play. McLaughlin points to Lisa Howey (Goffstown, NH/Goffstown), in her second year as a captain, and all of her returning players to fill leadership positions and take on more responsibilities. "Lisa learned the ropes last year and now knows what it takes to be a captain," stated McLaughlin. "It is tough coming in each year and starting fresh but this year we have many key players returning and the chemistry that goes along with that, so now we look to improve on execution," added McLaughlin. The Lady Saxons had only 82 shots on goal last season, and scored only 9 goals. The experienced defensive line definitely had their work cut out for them as opponents outshot the Saxons 207-82 and outscored them, 53-9. The defensive line returning is a strong advantage. "With our strong bond between the girls, we now have the ability to accurately communicate with each other and that should translate into moving the ball up field and more shot attempts," said McLaughlin. Returning to lead the attack for the Lady Saxons after a one year absence is senior forward Stephanie Rudd (Jordanville/Owen D. Young). Rudd's return is a definite boost to the attack and will help add depth on the offensive end of the field. "Stephanie is quick and can finish, she will help us to get a push towards the goal." Also in the forward spot is junior Stephanie Stirling (Pendleton/Starpoint). Last year, Stirling started 13 of 17 games and had a total of three points. A transfer from Alfred State, junior Courtney Briganti (Canisteo/Canisteo Central) will be expected to come in and contribute immediately. "She is a strong player with very good skills and I look for her to be a factor right away. I also feel she will help bridge the gap between the newcomers and veterans because right now she is a little of both," said McLaughlin. McLaughlin is also expecting a lot of action offensively from freshman Chelsea Hall (Elmira/Elmira Free Academy), and Melissa Polakos (Marlboro, NJ/Marlboro). "Hall is very quick, goes after the 50/ 50 ball, and has a strong soccer mind. Polakos is a very positive person on the field and is extremely coachable," McLaughlin added. Looking to head the ball more to the opponents half of the field will be junior midfielder Ellen Brandfonbrener (Franklin, MA/Medway), and sophomore Adrienne Egglinger (Amityville/Amityville Memorial). "Brandfonbrener is a good finisher and has an attacking mind so I expect to see her on the attack as well," added McLaughlin. Howey will be heading up the defensive front along with junior Morgan Pierce (Schoharie/Schoharie), and sophomore Sarah Chase (Lyon Mountain/Northern Adirondack). McLaughlin stated "Howey, a captain, is a leader by example and is the backbone for our defensive front. At the same time, the trio has learned to work together extremely well. They know each others strengths and weaknesses and can account for what the other is missing." Others expected to play a role on defense include freshman Jessica Brewster (Andover/Andover), Laura La Pireer (Maplecrest/Windham-Ashland-Jewlett Central), and Kristen Klein (Middleton/Goshen). "Brewster is a very aggressive player and will be looked upon to play both goal and in the field," said McLaughlin. Competing with Brewster for time in goal will be Elizabeth Dietsch (Marysville, OH/Marysville) a starter last year, and freshmen Brianna Paquette (West Burke, VT/St. Johnsbury), and Rebecca Pociask (Henniker, NH/John Stark Regional). "I am going to have it be goalie by committee, that way I can go with who is working for us right now," stated McLaughlin. The Lady Saxon kick into action on Sept. 2 for their home opener against Daemen and start conference action Sept. 13 at home against RIT. "Now that our team is a year older and has developed the chemistry that is crucial for a soccer team, I feel we can stop thinking about playing soccer and just go out there and have fun," exclaimed McLaughlin.