

Alfred men's rugby team wins Upstate Championship

11/07/17



SYRACUSE, NY The Alfred men's rugby team defeated Paul Smith's College, 58-19, on Saturday (Nov. 4), winning the Upstate Championship of the National Small College Rugby Organization.

With the victory, Alfred improves to 8-0 on the season and will now host SUNY Maritime (the second-seeded team in the Tri-State Small College Rugby Conference) in the NSCRO Northeast Region qualifier on Saturday, Nov. 11, (time to be announced) at Jericho Hill field, Alfred.

Regardless of outcome of the regional qualifier, Alfred will move on to compete in the NSCRO Northeast Regional Championships, Nov. 17-18 in North Adams, MA. The regional qualifier is played to determine seeding for the Northeast Regional Championships, which will be played in a bracket-style tournament format. The winner of the Northeast Regional Championships advances to next spring's NSCRO National Championships.

Saturday's match against Paul Smith's was played at the Syracuse Chargers Rugby Field in O'Connor Park. Alfred led 17-12 at the half before dominating play after intermission, outscoring Paul Smith's 41-7 in the second half. With the victory, Alfred secured the program's second-ever New York State men's rugby title and first since 1996.

Alfred is in the Western Division of the Upstate Small College Rugby Conference and this year went 6-0 in division playing, beating Canisius (32-0), Niagara (33-5), Ithaca (41-31), Rochester (41-0), St. John Fisher (56-17) and Hobart (41-0). Alfred beat Ithaca a second time (37-15) on Oct. 28 to win the West Division title.

The Alfred men's rugby team is made up of students from Alfred University and Alfred State College and practices and plays home matches at Alfred University's Jericho Hill field. The team was founded in 1985 by Bill Pulos (Alfred University, '77), who served as coach from 1985-90 and again from 2009-12.

Pulos resigned from coaching in 1990, but returned for a second stint as coach in 2009 following the death one of his former players, Alfred University alumnus Jeff Hollier '88. A four-year member of the Alfred men's rugby team, Hollier was the 1987-88 Upstate Rugby Union of New York Academic Athlete of the Year. He would go on to earn a medical degree from the University of Virginia and was director of Neurological Education at Penn State College of Medicine in Hershey, PA, at the time of his death.

Pulos' return to coaching in 2009 was a way to pay tribute to Hollier, his friend and one of most revered players in the history of the Alfred Rugby program. This year's team has dedicated its season to Hollier's memory.

Tony Aquilina, associate athletic director at Alfred University, coached the team from 2012-15; Rick Crouse, a team captain and student at Alfred State, has been player-coach since 2015. Pulos and Aquilina continue to assist with the program.