

AU's Manzer named Empire 8's top rookie as 14 Saxons earn all-conference honors

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ALFRED, NY Alfred University freshman wide receiver Jared Manzer (Johnson City, NY/Johnson City) has been named the 2006 Empire 8 Conference Rookie of the Year, the conference announced today. Manzer joins 13 other members of the AU football team to earn all-conference recognition. The Empire 8 announced its all-star teams today. Empire 8 coaches chose the teams based on regular season games. Three of the conference's teams have post-season games, including AU, which hosts Rochester in the ECAC Northwest championship Saturday at noon. In addition to being named Rookie of the Year, by unanimous vote, Manzer was named a First Team conference all-star. He is joined on the First Team by senior left tackle Mike Yokopovich (Webster, NY/Webster-Schroeder), junior defensive tackle Don Miller (LeRoy, NY/LeRoy), senior middle linebacker Nick Gatto (Bemus Point, NY/Maple Grove) and sophomore free safety Brian Nitsche (Portville, NY/Portville). Manzer led the Empire 8 in receptions (48) and touchdown catches (nine). He ranked third in receiving yards per game (62.4), fourth in kickoff return average (21.6), seventh in all-purpose yards per game (103.4), seventh in touchdowns scored (nine) and 10th in per-game scoring (5.4 points per game). His nine touchdown receptions tied an Alfred University single-season record. Yokopovich earned all-conference honors for the third time in his career and First Team honors for the first time. A Second Team selection in 2004 and 2005, he anchored an offense that ranked second in the Empire 8 in passing offense (210.4 yards per game), fifth in rushing offense (126.1 per game) and fourth overall (336.5 yards per game). The Saxons allowed only 11 sacks all year, which ranks second in the conference. Miller, Gatto and Nitsche anchored a Saxon defense that led the Empire 8 in total defense (246.8 yards per game) and pass defense (127.7 yards per game) and ranked third in scoring defense (17.8 points per game) and fourth in rush defense (119.1 yards per contest). Miller, an honorable mention all-star in 2004 and a Second Team selection last year, finished the regular season with 52 tackles (third among conference linemen and 17th overall), including 31 solo, five for loss and three sacks. He ranked third in the Empire 8 in fumble recoveries (two) and seventh in sacks per game (.30). The Saxons' short-yardage run specialist, Miller had four rushing touchdowns, tops on the team. Gatto, a Second Team conference pick in 2005, led the Saxons in tackles with 65 (30 solo, six for loss, two sacks). He ranked seventh in the Empire 8 in tackles per game (6.5) and was tied with Miller for third in fumble recoveries (two). Nitsche earned all-conference honors for the first time in his career. He has 35 tackles and two interceptions (55 return yards) to go with six pass breakups (tied for the team lead), a forced fumble and a fumble recovery. His eight passes defended are tied for seventh in the Empire 8. In two seasons, Nitsche has six interceptions and 75 tackles. Junior quarterback Paul Keeley (Caledonia, NY/Caledonia-Mumford), junior tailback Elmer Newsome (Cadosia, NY/Hancock), junior tight end Matt Gibbins (Clifton Park, NY/Shenendehowa), junior center Mike Callahan (Scotia, NY/Scotia-Glenville), junior defensive tackle Mike Penkin (Rochester, NY/Greece Athena), senior defensive end Andy Rantz (Montandon, PA/Milton) and freshman outside linebacker Chad Pieri (Caledonia, NY/LeRoy) earned Second Team honors for the Saxons. Keeley, an honorable mention selection last season (his first at AU after transferring from St. John Fisher), had a record-breaking season for the Saxons. His 24 touchdown passes broke the single-season record of 21 he set last year. He has 45 career TD passes, which rank first on the AU all-time list. He has 2,104 passing yards this year (third-highest single-season total in school history; his 2,173 from 2005 ranks second). Keeley, who shares the record for TD passes in a game (four) ranks in the top 10 in career passing yardage at AU and has a chance to break the school mark. His 24 touchdown passes leads the Empire 8 and his 210.4 passing yards per game ranks second in the conference. Newsome, a First Team selection in 2005, led the Saxons in rushing with 560 yards. His 56 rushing yards per game ranks eighth in the conference. He has three rushing TDs this year. Gibbins has 18 receptions for 298 yards and seven touchdowns (ranking fourth and third, respectively, on the team). Gibbins, whose seven touchdown catches rank second on the team, joins former Saxon and current graduate assistant coach Chris Reger, a First Team pick last year, as the only AU tight ends to earn all-Empire 8 honors. Rantz earned Second Team honors for a second straight year (he earned honorable mention in 2004) despite playing most of the year with a broken hand. He has 32 tackles, including 2.5 for loss, a pair of sacks and a forced fumble. Penkin, a two-year starter for the Saxons, is a first-time conference all-star. He has 31 tackles this year, including 4.5 for loss and two sacks, a fumble recovery and blocked kick. Callahan, a two-year starter at center, is a first-time all-conference pick. Callahan was also named the AU football team's Empire 8 Sportsman of the Year. Each season, the Empire 8 honors students-athletes from each conference school, who play on teams sponsored by the conference, with Sportsman of the Year awards. Honorees, chosen by their coaches,

exhibited outstanding sportsmanship in keeping with the conference's mission of "competing with honor and integrity."Pieri has had an outstanding freshman season. His 54 tackles (26 solo) rank second on the team and he leads the Saxons with 7.5 tackles for loss and four sacks. His .40 sacks per game rank fifth in the Empire 8 and he is 23rd in the conference in tackles per game.Junior cornerback Josh Rammacher (Angola, NY/Lake Shore) and junior placekicker Chris Reynolds (Pittsford, NY/Pittsford-Sutherland) earned honorable mention.Rammacher, who also served as the team's punter, is a first-time all-conference selection. While his season ended with an injury suffered in last weekend's regular-season finale, Rammacher ranks fourth on the team in tackles with 41 (31 solo, two for loss and a sack) to go with an interception and six pass breakups (tied for the team lead).Reynolds is one of the most reliable kickers in the Empire 8. He has made 97 percent of his extra point attempts (32 of 33), which leads the conference, and 70 percent of his field goal tries (seven of 10), which ranks third. His seven field goals and 5.2 points per game kicking rank third in the Empire 8. Reynolds has broken virtually all major single-season and career kicking records at AU. He hold single-season records for extra points (35, set in 2005), field goals (13, 2004) and points by a kicker (68, 2004) and has established school career records for field goals (28 entering Saturday's game), extra points (96) and scoring by a kicker (180).