

Ithaca wins Empire 8 softball title

5/09/10

ALFRED, NY - Ithaca College defeated Alfred University twice on Sunday to claim the Empire 8 Conference softball championship. The Bombers (30-13) won the first game, 3-2, in a contest that began Saturday but was suspended in the top of the third inning due to wind and rain, then won the conference crown with a 12-5 victory in the day's second game. With the win in the double-elimination conference tournament, Ithaca earns the Empire 8's automatic bid to the NCAA Division III championship tournament, which begins Thursday and Friday, May 13 and 14, with regional play. The NCAA will announce its tournament selections and regional brackets Monday, May 10, at noon; Alfred (34-6) will wait to see if it earns an at-large bid to the tournament. Ithaca's Alyssa Brook (Tinton Falls, NJ) was named tournament MVP. She won three games, including the Bombers' first win over AU on Sunday, then got the save in the afternoon's decisive title game. For the tournament, Brook allowed six runs (one earned) in 26 innings, striking out 22. In an elimination game against RIT on Friday, she tossed an eight-inning no-hitter, striking out nine. In the championship game, AU took a 3-0 lead in the bottom of the third, but Ithaca answered with a pair of runs in the fourth and three more in the fifth to take a 5-3 advantage. Alfred tied the game with two runs in the bottom of the fifth, but Ithaca answered with one in the sixth, then put the game out of reach with six runs, all unearned and all coming after AU starter Chelsey Cary (Corfu, NY/Pembroke) had retired the first two batters. Both teams struggled defensively, with Alfred making five errors and Ithaca three. Of the 17 runs scored, only five were earned. AU took its only lead of the game with three unearned runs in the third. With two outs and runners on first and second the Saxons' Jesika LeBarron (Campbell, NY) reached on an error to load the bases. Ashley Passaro (Long Beach, NY) was hit by a pitch to bring in one run and Karen Folts (Penn Yan, NY) drew a bases loaded walk to plate another. Emily Fenton (Thorofare, NJ) reached on an error to bring in inning's third run. Ithaca scored two unearned runs in the fourth. Molly O'Donnell (Niskayuna, NY) and Jennifer Biondi (Denville, NJ) drew two-out walks and an error loaded the bases before another error allowed O'Donnell and Biondi to score. Ithaca took a 5-3 lead in the fifth inning. Kait Dolan (Farmington, NY) singled and Cait Ryan (Clarksburg, NJ) reached on an error before Brittany Lillie (Honeoye Falls, NY) drove Dolan home with a single. After a flyout, O'Donnell walked to lead the bases and Biondi drove in two with single. AU tied the game at 5-5 on a two-out, two-run triple by Hana Gross (Union, NJ), but Ithaca reclaimed the lead when Allison Greaney (Iselin, NJ) scored on a groundout with one out. Ryan and Lillie each had two-RBI hits in the seventh as the Bombers put the game out of reach. Brook, who started the game but was removed for Greaney after three innings, re-entered and tossed two hitless innings, striking out the side in the seventh to earn the save. Brook allowed three runs (all unearned) on three hits and struck out five. Greaney, who got the win, allowed two earned runs and struck out one in two innings of work. Cary allowed 12 runs (three earned) on 10 hits in 6 2/3 innings, striking out three and walking eight (three intentionally). Nicole Hedrick (Albany, NY) relieved Cary and allowed one hit an RBI triple by Kerry Barger (Carmel, NY) before getting the final out of the seventh. Ryan and Lillie each had two hits, drove in three and scored twice. Biondi was 2-for-3 with two RBIs and a run scored and Dolan and Greaney each scored twice. Hedrick went 3-for-4 and scored a run for Alfred. Gross had two hits and scored twice and Passaro and Folts each drove in a run. In Sunday's first game, the teams resumed play with the score tied 2-2 with Alfred batting and two outs in the top of the third. Brook and Cary tossed scoreless innings until the bottom of the sixth, when Ithaca tallied what proved to be the winning run. Biondi was hit by a pitch to open the inning, stole second and was sacrificed to third before scoring on Dolan's two-out single. Brook got the win, tossing six shutout innings in relief of starter Lillie and allowing four hits and striking out four. AU loaded the bases with two outs in the seventh, but Brook got Molly Shepherd (Camillus, NY) to fly out to the catcher to end the game. Cary took the loss in relief of Hedrick, allowing one run on three hits and striking out a pair over 4 1/3 innings. Passaro was 2-for-3 with an RBI double and a run scored for AU. Folts had a run-scoring single and LeBarron went 1-for-2 with a run. Lillie hit two doubles and Greaney had an RBI and scored a run for Ithaca. Annmarie Forenza (Whitehouse Station, NJ) also had an RBI for the Bombers.