

## **AU softball team splits with Hartwick, clinches first-ever Empire 8 playoff berth**

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HORNELL, NY The Alfred University women's softball team split its doubleheader against visiting Hartwick College at Hornell High School Wednesday afternoon. In winning the first game, 4-3 in eight innings, Alfred clinched its first-ever berth in the Empire 8 Conference championship tournament. Alfred (10-18 overall) lost the nightcap, 5-0, and now has a 5-5 conference record, good for fourth place in the Empire 8 standings, a half-game behind third place Utica. The Empire 8 will finalize pairings for the double-elimination championship tournament after regular season play concludes this weekend. In the first game against Hartwick Wednesday, AU rallied from a 3-2 deficit, tying the game in the bottom of the seventh on a two-out double by senior pitcher Heidi Brooks (Wayland, NY/Wayland-Cohocton), which scored senior outfielder Adrienne Egglinger (Amityville, NY/Amityville Memorial) from second base. After AU held Hartwick scoreless in the top of the eighth, the Lady Saxons won it on a one-out double by junior first baseman Amy Plank (Hornell, NY/Hornell), which drove in junior third baseman Lauren Mastin (Springwater, NY/Wayland-Cohocton) from second. Brooks got the win on the mound for AU, allowing three earned runs on seven hits over eight innings while striking out five. She finished the game with a hit and two RBIs. Mastin and Plank each drove in a run and Egglinger scored three times. Hartwick was led by first baseman Katie Benak and pitcher Kelsey Heider (one RBI), each with a pair of hits. Heider allowed four runs (two earned) over seven innings while striking out 12 batters. AU was without its top hurler, senior Brittany Curran (Alfred, NY/Alfred-Almond), who missed the games due to illness. Mastin pitched the first game of her collegiate career in the nightcap, allowing five runs (two earned) on seven hits. Heider went the distance on the mound to pick up the shutout win for Hartwick, allowing four AU hits (all singles), striking out seven and walking none. Benak went 3-for-4 with two runs and a pair of RBIs to pace the Lady Hawk offense. Alfred wraps up its regular with two games at Utica Saturday afternoon at 2 p.m. If AU sweeps the doubleheader, the Lady Saxons would finish the regular in third place in the conference. AU could also earn the tournament's third seed by splitting its doubleheader with Utica, provided Utica loses to St. John Fisher in its final regular season game Sunday afternoon. Ithaca, which finished the season unbeaten in conference play, will host the Empire 8 championship tournament, May 5-6. If AU finishes third in the conference, the Lady Saxons will play second-seeded St. John Fisher at 10 a.m. Friday, May 5, in Game 1. If they are seeded fourth, they will play top-seeded Ithaca at noon Friday in Game 2. The losers of the first-round games will play at 2 p.m. Friday in Game 3, the loser of which will be eliminated. The winners of the first-round games play at 4 p.m. in Game 4. Game 5, at 11 a.m. Saturday, May 6, will pit the winner of Game 3 against the loser of Game 4. The winner of Game 4 will play the winner of Game 5 at 1 p.m. Saturday (Game 6). Game 7, if necessary, would be played at 3 p.m. Saturday, Sunday, May 7, is reserved as a rain date.