

Saxon soccer team has ingredients for success

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Alfred University men's soccer team has high expectations for 2000ALFRED This season, the Alfred University Men's Soccer Team has high expectations. The Saxons believe that they will be able to better their 7-9-1 record from last year. "This could be one of the best years in recent history," Head Coach Ken Hassler said. "Some team records should fall this year and we should be competing for post-season play." The biggest difference between the team this year's and last year's squad will be experience. Last season, nine of the 11 starters were either freshman or sophomores. Now, with an extra year of experience for those starters, the team can pick up where they left off at the end of last season. "This is a growing year for us," Hassler said. "If we can avoid injuries with this group of guys, we can have a breakout year." Up front, juniors Guy-Robert Desir (Queens Village/Springfield Gardens) and Karl Gnann (Holley/Holley) will lead the Saxons. Desir had a team-high six assists last year and added a goal for a total of eight points. Desir is an excellent one-on-one player with dangerous scoring ability. Add Gnann's pinpoint shooting accuracy, and the Saxons should put balls into the net. Sophomore Andy Gennarini (Monroe, CT/Masuk) and freshman James Kopsaftis (Port Murray, NJ/Voorhees) will also see time playing up front. Hassler hopes to get much more production out of his forwards this year. "We are more dangerous up front with a group of guys that play well together," he said. "They all have good size, speed and intensity." In the midfield, the Saxons will be led by junior tri-captain Jon Bridges (Topeka, KS/Topeka). Bridges, whose eight goals and 19 points led the team, was a 1999 First Team All-Empire Eight Conference player. Along with Bridges, senior Marc Fittipaldi (Pittsford/Pittsford-Sutherland), and sophomore Rick DeSalvo (Bath/Bath-Haverling) both have great individual skills. Fittipaldi has one of most powerful shots on the team, while DeSalvo is a smart, creative player. Add freshmen Dan Hale (West Deptford/West Deptford) and Kyle Beebe (Bath/Bath-Haverling) and Hassler has an exciting combination of experience and intelligence in the midfield. On defense, senior tri-captain Adam Reynolds (Honeoye Falls/Honeoye Falls-Lima) and sophomore A.J. Hicks (Poughkeepsie/Spackenkill) will try to improve on last year's 1.64 goals against average. Reynolds is a strong and intense defender while Hicks reads and anticipates game play very well. Hicks also starts the attack well from the backfield. Junior tri-captain Scott Wallace (Wayne, NJ/Wayne) is the most intense and hardest worker on the team. Sophomore Pat Mancini (Endwell/Maine-Endwell), and freshmen Chris Dionne (New Preston, CT/Shepaug) and Mike Ilecki (Rochester/Wheatland-Chili) will also see plenty of time on the field. The defense is very well organized, very intelligent and difficult to beat individually and as a team, Hassler said. In the net, sophomore Kevin Ball (Wheeling, WV/Linsly School) is coming off of strong spring season. His solid play will instill confidence in every player on the field, Hassler said. Sophomore Oliver Chapman (Detroit, MI/Cranbrook) has worked hard developing his skills and will push Ball for the starting spot. Other players to watch for are junior forward Kevin McGee (Seaford/St. Anthony's); junior midfielder Dale Owen (Endicott/Union Endicott), a transfer from Broome Community College; sophomore defender Jim Carroll (Buffalo/Bishop Timon); sophomore midfielder Shane Donohoe (Syracuse/West Genesee), and freshmen Keith Phelan (Baldwin/Baldwin) and Andy Kernahan (Rushford/Cuba-Rushford). "This is an excellent group of players that are also brimming with positive attitudes and great coachability," Hassler said.