

## Next up for Saxons in NCAA playoffs: Second-ranked Mount Union

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ALFRED, NY With the program's first two NCAA playoff victories under its belts, the Alfred University football team now prepares for its greatest challenge yet: an East Region final this Saturday, Dec. 4, against Mount Union, one of the most successful Division III programs in the country. Kickoff for the game between Alfred (10-2), the region's sixth seed, and top-seeded Mount Union is at noon. Alfred is coming off a 34-20 victory Saturday against second-seeded SUNY Cortland. Mount Union (12-0), the second-ranked team in the nation, beat fourth-seeded Delaware Valley, 31-3. AU's victory over Cortland was due in large part to the ground game. AU was able to run the ball, totaling for 225 yards rushing, with freshman tailback Austin Dwyer (Hornell, NY/Hornell) accounting for 186 yards on 32 carries with a touchdown. Junior linebacker Nick Clark (Canisteo, NY/Canisteo-Greenwood), the Saxons' short-yardage run specialist, had six carries for 42 yards and three TDs. Clark's last score, a 29-yard run with 1:20 left in regulation, restored a 14-point lead for the Saxons and effectively shut the door on any hopes for a Cortland comeback. An effective run game allowed junior quarterback Tom Secky (Bemus Point, NY/Maple Grove) the time to complete 17 passes for 211 yards and a touchdown, as the Saxons produced 436 yards of offense against a Red Dragon team that had been allowing only 226 per game, including a mere 79 on the ground. The Saxons' defense, meanwhile, shut down a solid Cortland running game. The Red Dragons came into the game averaging 191 yards on the ground; AU held Cortland to 79 yards rushing, with tailback Justin Autera the nation's 18th ranked runner (120 yards per game) coming managing only 56. Alfred had three interceptions as Cortland produced 253 yards of offense, well below its average of 348 per contest. Mount Union manhandled a solid Delaware Valley team, churning out 469 yards offense (more than double what the Aggies had been allowing), including 309 yards on the ground. The Raiders possess three solid skill players on offense sophomore quarterback Neal Seaman, sophomore tailback Jeremy Murray and senior wide receiver Cecil Shorts and each played a major role in Mount Union's regional semifinal win. Seaman threw for 160 yards and a score; Murray ran for 181 yards with two TDs, and Shorts caught 10 passes for 112 yards and a TD and ran for 81 and a score. The Mount Union defense, one of the best in Division III, held Delaware Valley in check, allowing 277 yards of offense. The Raiders held the Aggies, who were averaging more than 200 yards rushing per game, to 53 yards. Delaware Valley tailback Matt Cook, who had rushed for nearly 1,200 yards coming in, was held to 18 on seven carries. Alfred comes into Saturday's game averaging 399 yards of offense (226 passing, 173 rushing) and scoring 35.2 points per contest. On the season, Dwyer has run 217 times for 1,390 yards and eight touchdowns, with his 116 yards rushing per game ranking 22nd in the country. Secky has completed 214 of 346 passes for 2,640 yards, 26 touchdowns and 13 interceptions. Senior Ryan Thon (Victor, NY/Victor) has a school single-season record 71 catches for 931 yards and a school-record 15 touchdowns; sophomore wide receiver Andre McCloud (Bath, NY/Haverling) has 25 catches for 420 yards and a TD; freshman wideout Josh Phillips (Syracuse, NY/West Genesee) has 45 for 532 yards and a score, and senior tight end D.J. Loughlin-Pope (Corning, NY/Corning East) has 10 catches (three for TDs). On the season, Mount Union averages 40.5 points per contest. Seaman has completed 217 of 314 passes for 2,945 yards, 27 touchdowns and eight interceptions and ranks seventh in the country in pass efficiency. Murray has run for 1,403 yards and 19 touchdowns, ranking 11th in the country in rushing yards per game (127.5). His backup, Zac Lemmon, has 346 yards rushing and fullback Wes Ryder has 317. Shorts has played in nine games and caught 50 passes for 826 yards and 15 touchdowns. Wide receiver Jasper Collins has caught 51 passes for 718 yards and tight end Kyle Miller has 49

catches for 669 yards and five scores. The Saxon defense has allowed 264 yards of offense per game (23rd in the country) and ranks 32nd (155 yards) and 35th (109 yards), respectively, in pass and run defense. AU is allowing opponents 18.4 points per game. On the season, Clark leads AU with 96 tackles (10.5 for loss, three sacks), with three interceptions. Sophomore tackle Mike Raplee (Dundee, NY/Dundee) has 85 tackles (17.5 for loss, six sacks); senior linebacker Chad Pieri (LeRoy, NY/Caledonia-Mumford) has 69 tackles (nine for loss); sophomore strong safety Reggie Pressley (Rochester, NY/Gates-Chili) has 66 tackles (five for loss), an interception, six pass breakups, a forced fumble and two recoveries; junior end Marcellus Jones (Lancaster, NY/Lancaster) has a team-best eight sacks; and junior cornerback Roland O'Brien (Hoosick Falls, NY/Hoosick Falls) has a team-leading seven INTs and 13 pass breakups. Dwyer, ranked 14th in the nation in all-purpose yards (167 per game), averages 21.6 yards on kick returns and 9.1 yards on punt returns. Junior kicker/punter Eric Rockwood (Allegany, NY/Allegany-Limestone) has made five of six field goal attempts and 55 of 58 PATs, and averages 36.8 yards on punts. Mount Union ranks second in the nation in total defense (198 yards per game) and ranks ninth (126 yards) and 10th (72 yards), respectively, in pass and run defense. The Raiders allow 6.8 points per game, tops in Division III. On the season, defensive end Lambert Budzinski has a team-best 89 tackles with 17 sacks and 26 tackles for loss. He ranks second in the nation in sacks and 10th in tackles for loss. Linebacker Sam Kershaw has 78 tackles (nine for loss); end Charles Dieuseul has 64 tackles (18 for loss, 7.5 sacks) and three forced fumbles, and strong safety Nick Driskill has 52 tackles (11 for loss, three sacks) and a team-leading five INTs. Shorts averages 29.1 yards on kick returns (one TD) and 19.3 yards on punt returns (two scores). Placekicker Tyler Almeida has made 12 of 14 field goal tries and 63 of 65 PATs and Brandon Mathie averages 31.9 yards per punt. Alfred has made the NCAA playoffs three times and has a 2-2 all-time record in the national championship tournament. The Saxons lost in the first round each of the previous two seasons it made the NCAAs (1981, 2009). Mount Union is making its 22nd NCAA appearance and 19th straight in the regional finals and has a 67-11 all-time record in the tournament, with 10 national titles to its credit.