

Alfred University volleyball team looks forward to 2006 season

9/05/06

ALFRED, NY The 2006 Alfred University volleyball roster has only eight players, but what the team lacks in numbers, it more than makes up for in enthusiasm and a desire to improve. "We're fresh and young with plenty of opportunity to grow as a team," said third-year head coach Kathy Dyring. "Everyone will have a role on this team." Alfred will need to overcome the loss to graduation of a trio of four-year letterwinners in Beth Sanger, Catherine Rieck and Deen Genzardi if the team hopes to improve on last year's 7-20 record. The Lady Saxons will rely heavily on their four veterans as four freshman players become acclimated to the college game. The team's leading returnee is senior middle hitter Sarah Berry (Mora, MN/Mora). A starter each of her three years at Alfred, Berry was an Empire 8 all-star in 2005 when she led the team in blocks with 112 (76 solo) and was fourth in kills with 126. Dyring will look for even greater contributions from Berry in 2006. "Sarah is our most experienced player and a team leader," Dyring said. "She's got big shoes to fill and we have big expectations for her. She's ready to take on that challenge." Another top returning player is sophomore right side hitter Katie Lane (Edison NJ/John P. Stevens). Despite playing in only 64 of 94 games as a freshman last year, Lane still managed 46 blocks (third on the team) to go with 51 kills. She looks to have a greater impact on the team this season. "Katie played well last year, particularly after switching from outside hitter to the right side," Dyring said. "We expect a lot of blocks from her this year." Other returnees are senior outside hitter Tracy Haskell (Manhattan Beach, CA/Midland School) and senior defensive specialist Annie Chih (Queens, NY/Townsend). Both have served as reserves throughout their careers and will assume more playing time this fall. Haskell had 88 digs in 58 games last year, while Chih had seven aces and 12 digs in 34 games. "Tracy and Annie will need to step up and take on greater roles this year," Dyring said. Four freshmen will be counted on to contribute immediately this year: outside hitter Janelle Brandow (Dolgeville, NY/Dolgeville), setter Danielle Van Cott (Rochester, NY/Webster Schroeder), middle hitter Meghan Barry (Goochland, VA/Goochland) and libero Shannon Mather (Endicott, NY/Union-Endicott). "Mather is a good natural athlete. She's great and reading the court and will be a huge help to us defensively. (Van Cott) has played setter in the past and is ready to take on that role again," Dyring commented. "Meg Barry may be the strongest hitter we have. She's very versatile and can play anywhere. (Brandow) has good skills and just needs to adapt to the college game. She's going to be a good asset to the team." Dyring said her team has shown in preseason workouts a desire to get better and gel as a team. She expects that attitude to carry over throughout the season. "We're looking for steady improvement right now," she said. "We're so young, we need time to come together as a team. We just want to start strong and continue forward. This group is enthusiastic and confident. They know it's a long season and they need to pull together and work hard."