

AU football team shuts out Norwich to take lead atop Empire 8 standings

10/04/08

ALFRED, NY The Alfred University football team used a balanced offensive attack and stingy defense to shut out visiting Empire 8 Conference foe Norwich, 42-0, Saturday afternoon at Merrill Field. The Saxons, playing before a Homecoming crowd of more than 4,000, produced 379 yards of offense (176 rushing, 203 passing) and held the visitors to 157 yards of offense, including a mere 40 on the ground. With the victory, AU has won four straight to improve to 4-1 overall and 2-0 in the Empire 8, which places the Saxons atop the conference standings, a head of 1-1 Hartwick, Ithaca and St. John Fisher. AU got on the board midway through the opening period, when senior tailback Morgan O'Brien (Bradford, PA/Bradford) capped a six-play 57-yard drive with a one-yard touchdown run. The PAT failed and AU led, 6-0. With 24 seconds left in the opening stanza, freshman quarterback Tom Secky (Bemus Point, NY/Maple Grove) threw a 27-yard scoring toss to sophomore tight end D.J. Loughlin-Pope (Corning, NY/Corning East), then hit O'Brien on a two-point conversion pass to give the Saxons a 14-0 lead going into the second quarter. Alfred scored its third touchdown of the contest with 4:41 left in the half, when Secky connected with senior tight end Rahsaan Parks (Binghamton, NY/Binghamton) on an eight-yard pass to cap a four-play, 48-yard drive. The catch and touchdown were the first of Parks' career. The Saxons got on the board quickly in the third. Two plays after O'Brien returned the second-half kickoff to midfield, Secky threw a short pass over the middle to junior wideout Jared Manzer (Johnson City, NY/Johnson City), who broke several tackles on his way to a 48-yard scoring play and a 28-0 AU lead. AU got the ball right back when junior defensive end Jerry Bond (Watkins Glen, NY/Watkins Glen) sacked Norwich quarterback Chris Gilding on a fourth-and-4 play from the AU 33-yard line. Alfred marched 57 yards in seven plays, with the drive ending on an eight-yard scoring pass from Secky to Manzer with 8:25 left on the third quarter clock. The Saxons closed out the scoring with just under nine minutes left in the fourth, when O'Brien scampered in from seven yards out to cap an 11-play 80-yard drive. O'Brien rushed for 129 yards on 21 carries for his second straight 100-yard game and Secky completed 14 of 19 passes for 203 yards and four touchdowns. Pope (76 yards receiving) and Manzer (62 yards) each had three catches and senior wide receiver Trevor Bork (Fisher, NY/Victor) had a team-high four catches for 34 yards. Gilding completed 12 of 23 passes for 103 yards and an interception and was his team's leading rusher with 30 yards on 10 carries. Wide receiver Adrian Dantzler caught four passes for 23 yards and wideout Nate Stroffoleno caught a pair for 38 yards. Senior tackle Rob Ritter (Fairport, NY/Penfield) had a team-high 10 tackles for the Saxons. Senior strong safety Jeremy Darron (LeRoy, NY/Caledonia-Mumford) (six tackles), freshman end Marcellus Jones (Lancaster, NY/Lancaster) (four tackles), senior linebacker John Soule (Richfield Springs, NY/Richfield Springs) (seven tackles, forced fumble), and Bond each had sacks. Freshman linebacker Nick Clark (Canisteo, NY/Canisteo-Greenwood) had six tackles (four solo, two for loss); senior cornerback Ron Smith (Lyons, NY/Lyons) had five solo tackles, a blocked field goal attempt, and a pass breakup; and senior cornerback Matt Van Woeart (Schenectady, NY/Schalmont) had three solo tackles and an interception. Strong safety Donovan Brown had a game-high 11 tackles to pace the Norwich defense. Linebacker James Kiritsy had eight tackles (five solo, one for loss), while cornerback E.J. Flannigan had six tackles. Alfred is in action next on Saturday, Oct. 11, at 1 p.m. at Hartwick. Norwich hosts Ithaca at 1 p.m. next Saturday.