

Alfred University football camp draws 225 high school players

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ALFRED "We're very pleased with how the camp has grown," commented AU head coach Dave Murray, who has seen camp attendance rise in each of his six seasons at the Saxons' helm. Players from Victor (Rochester area) High School (45), West Genesee and Central Square (Syracuse area) high schools (40 campers each), Maple Grove (Jamestown area) and Raritan (NJ) high schools (35 campers each) and Cassadaga Valley (Jamestown area) High School (30). One player from Allegany-Limestone High School also attended this year's camp. Attendance this year was about 25 more than the record 200 from 2002 and well above the 24, all from Raritan, who attended the inaugural camp in 1998, the summer before Murray's first season as AU coach. Murray said the camp has proven to be a solid recruiting tool for the AU football program, as some former campers have wound up playing for the Saxons. Murray attributes the camp's success to a number of factors. Because it is a team-oriented camp, it offers numerous benefits to participating high school coaches and players, most notable the chance to be together in an instructional atmosphere away from home. "It's good for camaraderie," Murray said. "They have a chance to bond and develop team chemistry." Jim Haugh, coach at Victor High, agrees. "The biggest benefit is building camaraderie," said Haugh, who has been bringing his team to the AU camp since 2000. "You walk out of here much closer as a team." "The bonding has been tremendous," Mark Peterson said, the Cassadaga Valley head coach, whose team first attended the AU camp in 2001. "The camp has great value as a team-building experience." Murray added that the camp gives teams a head start on preparing for the upcoming season. With most high school preseason camps opening in mid-August, coaches have the opportunity to get to know their players (especially newcomers) well in advance. They can also implement offense and defensive schemes and try them out in drills with other participating schools. "Because it's team oriented, it's almost like an NFL mini-camp," Murray said. "It really gives teams a jump on their season and it's great that they have the chance to work out against other teams." Bert Conklin, head coach at Central Square, agrees with Murray. "Building team unity and working with one another is the greatest benefit," Conklin said, whose team attended the AU camp for the first time this year. "We wanted to find a way to build team morale and unity, and we wanted the kids to have fun." "Our kids get a great head start," said Anthony Petruzzi, assistant coach at Raritan, whose team has been coming to the AU camp the last six summers. "It's a big advantage having that extra week. You see a lot of different looks from the other teams, and you can identify your strengths and the things you'll have to coach up during the season. You find out the answers to a lot of questions before the season starts." "This gives us a great head start. We're a young team, and our players are getting a ton of valuable information here. It's a great confidence booster. It lets our kids know what the competition is all about and what we can accomplish. And the kids are having a great time." "It gives us an early start on our season," said Maple Grove head coach Curt Fischer. "With our young players, we have a chance to get a look at them and get them involved early." "Getting a chance to work on fundamentals is of great importance to us," said Dallas Barton, coach at West Genesee. "It helps our kids because they know earlier what we want to teach. And participating in drills with the other teams gets the kids excited." Campers are given instruction by members of the AU football coaching staff (Murray is joined by top assistants Greg Burton and Bob Rankl) as well as coaches from participating high school teams. Some AU players help out as well. "The visiting coaches are great," Murray said. "They all run successful programs and really have a lot to offer."