

Saxons come up just short in 43-35 loss to Ithaca

11/08/08



ALFRED, NY The Alfred University football team's fourth-quarter comeback attempt against visiting Ithaca College Saturday afternoon came up agonizingly short as the visiting Bombers claimed a 43-35 victory on Merrill Field. With AU trailing by eight, on third-and-10 from their own 38-yard line, freshman quarterback Tom Secky (Bemus Point, NY/Maple Grove) connected on a 48-yard bomb to sophomore wideout Ryan Thon (Victor, BY/Victor) to the Ithaca 14-yard line with 45 seconds left. Two plays later, Secky hit senior receiver Trevor Bork (Fishers, NY, Victor) on a 13-yard pass that gave AU a first-and-goal at the Ithaca 1-yard line. After a Secky spike to stop the clock, the Saxons were penalized for delay of game, moving the ball to the 6-yard line. Secky's next three passes fell incomplete and Ithaca got the ball on downs, running out the clock and clinching a share of the Empire 8 Conference title. AU got on the board first, recovering an Ithaca fumble at the Ithaca 45-yard line on the Bombers third play of their opening possession. The Saxons marched 45 yards in eight plays, capped by one-yard TD run by junior tailback Vinson Hendrix (Rochester, NY/ East) with 10:36 left in the opening frame. Ithaca tied the game on it's next possession when quarterback Dan Juvan ran in from a yard out three seconds into the second quarter to cap a 12-play 93-yard drive. The Bombers got the ball right back when AU fumbled on the ensuing kickoff return and Ithaca recovered at the Alfred 26. One play later, tailback Dan Ruggieri sprinted in from 26-yards and, after a failed PAT, Ithaca led, 13-7. The Saxons reclaimed the lead, 14-13 on their following possession, as Secky ended a nine-play 66-yard drive with an eight-yard TD scamper on third down. AU took a 21-13 lead two possessions later. On first-and-10 from the Ithaca 44, junior wideout Jared Manzer (Johnson City, NY/Johnson City) took a handoff from Secky, pulled up and lofted a long pass to Bork, who was brought down at the Bomber 2-yard line. On the next play, Hendrix scored to give the Saxons their last lead of the contest. Ithaca gained momentum going into the halftime intermission by scoring 10 points in the final two minutes of the half. Ruggieri tallied his second TD of the game with a 12-yard run with 1:48 left. Alfred drove to the Ithaca 38 on its ensuing possession, but on second-and-10, Secky was intercepted by Bomber defensive end Matt Dibble, who returned the ball to the AU 11-yard line with 30 seconds remaining. AU held the Bombers out of the endzone, but Ithaca got a 26-yard field goal from Andrew Rogowski to give his team a 22-21 lead at the half. Ithaca dominated the third quarter, outscoring AU 14-0 to take a seemingly insurmountable 36-21 lead going into the final period. Ruggieri, who finished with 194 yards rushing and four TDs, scored his third of the game on Ithaca's first possession of the third. After a blocked AU field goal attempt, Ithaca backup quarterback Brian Grastorf connected with wideout Kyle Crandall on a 76-yard scoring pass. The Bombers widened their lead to 43-21 when Ruggieri rumbled in from 63 yards. AU wouldn't go away easily as Hendrix scored his second touchdown of the game on a 13-yard run with 12:03 left in regulation. The two-point conversion try failed and Ithaca led 43-27. AU got the ball back when Grastorf was intercepted by senior free safety Brian Nitsche (Portville, NY/Portville) at the AU 19-yard line. Six plays later, Secky connected with Bork on a 43-yard TD pass and, following a successful two-point conversion, AU was within one score, 43-35. Secky finished with 355 yards passing with one touchdown and an interception. Bork had a record day, setting a new school single-game mark for receiving yards with 208 and tying the single-game standard for receptions with 11. Hendrix ran for 94 yard rushing as the Saxons put up 541 yards of offense. Ithaca's offense was effective as well, with the Bombers producing 461 yards. Grastorf finished with 159 yards passing with one interception and a touchdown. Nitsche had eight tackles (four solo), a forced fumble and an

interception to pace the Alfred defense. Junior tackle Jerry Bond (Watkins Glen, NY/Watkins Glen) had six tackles (three solo; three for loss) and senior tackle Rob Ritter (Fairport, NY/Penfield) had eight stops. Senior middle linebacker John Soule (Richfield Springs, NY/Richfield Springs) added six tackles and an interception. Linebacker Matt Scalice had a game-high 16 tackles (six solo) and a forced fumble to lead the Ithaca defense. Cornerback Jason Chier had 10 stops and a fumble recover, and cornerback Spencer White had nine tackles and a forced fumble. Alfred is in action next on Saturday, Nov. 15, at 1 p.m. against visiting St. John Fisher in the Saxons' regular season finale.