

## Saxons arrive on campus to begin Empire 8 title defense

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The AU football team arrived on campus Aug. 11 for preseason camp.

Some 190 players returnees and newcomers arrived on the Alfred University campus Friday, Aug. 11, to begin 2017 preseason camp for the Saxon football team.

Head coach Bob Rankl and his staff were set to hold their first practice Friday evening at Yunevich Stadium as the Saxons prepare to defend the Empire 8 Conference title they won in 2016. The team will be a solid mix of veterans and newcomers, led on offense by senior tailback/wide receiver Maleke Fuentes and on defense by senior outside linebacker A.J. LiCata.

Fuentes, a former Empire 8 Rookie of the Year, was a First Team All-Empire 8 pick in 2016. LiCata was a First Team All-American and the Empire 8 and ECAC North Defensive Player of the Year a season ago; he has earned First Team preseason All-American honors from five organizations ahead of the 2017 campaign.

The Saxons won a school-record 12 games last year and went 8-0 in E8 play, becoming the first team in league history to go through a regular season unbeaten. AU won two NCAA playoff games at home before falling in the national quarterfinals to visiting Mount Union. The Saxons finished the season 12-1 and were ranked 12th in the final AFCA and D3football.com polls.

Alfred, ranked 21st nationally in the 2017 Preseason D3football.com poll, opens its season Sept. 2 at Ithaca. After a bye week, the Saxons play their home and conference opener Sept. 16 against Utica.