

AU football ranked third in Empire 8 preseason coaches' poll

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ALFRED, NY The Alfred University football team is ranked third in the recently-released Empire 8 Conference preseason coaches' poll. AU is ranked behind top-ranked Ithaca, the defending conference champs, and St. John Fisher. Ithaca received five of the seven first-place votes while Fisher received the other two. Rounding out the preseason conference rankings are Springfield (fourth), Utica (fifth), Hartwick (sixth) and Norwich (seventh). Alfred, which is ranked 35h in Football Gazette's Top 40 preseason poll for Division III, returns 16 starters from a team that finished the 2005 season with a 9-2 record, placing second in the conference standings with a 5-1 mark. The Saxons ended the season with a victory over Maine Maritime in the ECAC North Atlantic Bowl Championship. Alfred has four opponents on its 2006 schedule that are also listed in the Football Gazette preseason rankings: Hobart (14th), Ithaca (19th), Thiel (21st) and St. John Fisher (31st). All fou8r games will be played at home. The Saxons open preseason camp Aug. 18. Alfred's season opener is Saturday, Sept. 9, at 1 p.m. at Merrill Field against visiting Thiel.