

## Alfred University women's lacrosse team has reason for optimism in 2005

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ALFRED, NY The 2004 campaign for the Alfred University women's lacrosse team was not what first year head coach Kathleen Nepp had in mind when she took the reigns. Still, despite a 3-10 record (2-5 Empire 8), Nepp is optimistic as she looks forward to 2005. The Lady Saxons were stocked this season with experience, carrying six seniors on the 2004 roster. Nepp is encouraged by the performance of her veterans and feels their efforts made an impression on the underclassmen. "Of course no one enters a season thinking they will lose, but this season taught me how special all of my players are and how much heart they really have," said Nepp. "The senior core was a solid group of girls that was able to pass on experience to the younger members, have fun, and also work hard when I needed them to." Alfred exhibited marked improvement from last season, particularly in Empire 8 action. Playing in one of the toughest conference's in Division III (two Empire 8 teams made the NCAA Division III tournament), the Lady Saxons won two games and narrowly lost two others. In 2003, Alfred was winless in seven conference games. The Empire 8 recognized three seniors from this year's squad when it announced the All-Conference teams. Senior midfielder Katie Haarmann (Ridgewood, NJ/Ridgewood), who returned to the team this season after a two-year absence, was named to the First Team. Haarmann recorded a team-high 48 points on 40 goals and eight assists. She also led the Empire 8 in ground balls with 74 while notching 42 draw controls (second in the conference). "Haarmann was our leader on the field and our go-to girl. She possesses speed and quickness which is essential for a good attacker," said Nepp. Named to the Second Team were senior attack Chris Sanford (Bowdoinham, ME/Mt. Ararat) and senior defender Katie Ratchuk (South Buffalo/Mt. Mercy). In 12 games, Sanford (a Second Team all-conference selection in 2002 and 2003 as well) managed 43 points on 36 goals and seven assists, while securing 12 groundballs. Ratchuk tallied 14 points in 12 games on nine goals and five assists, while picking up 31 groundballs and causing seven turnovers. "Both Chris and Katie have solid skills and were crucial to holding down both ends of the field for us; it was great to see them get recognized," stated Nepp. Other seniors that had solid seasons were goalie Jessica Dunster (Auburn/Auburn), attacker Kelly Farrell (Meriden, NH/Kimball Union) and midfielder Emily Mishalanie (Holland Patent/Holland Patent). Dunster, a four-year starter and team captain, finished her career with 587 saves, a school record. She also holds the school record for saves in a season with 171, which she set in 2003. Her 19 wins in goal are second all-time. In the field, she scored eight goals and assisted on one. "Dunster was very hard worker and this past year was the backbone of our defense," said Nepp. Farrell a four-year letter-winner and team captain, finished her career with 100 career points on 55 goals and 45 assists and 83 career groundballs. In 2004, she notched 35 points on 16 goals and 19 assists, while collecting 25 groundballs. "Kelly was an extremely hard worker who could always find the lighter side in everything, she will surely be missed," said Nepp. With no prior experience, Mishalanie developed into a solid player who could be used all over the field. In 13 games, she collected 15 groundballs and caused two turnovers on the defensive end. "Even though this was Emily's first year on the team, she made up for her lack of experience with tremendous hustle and heart," said Nepp. While AU will miss the experience and talent provided by its seniors, a core of underclassmen gained valuable experience this year and will provide a solid foundation in 2005. Olivia Churchill (Bath, ME/Morse) and Melissa Stephen (Portville/Portville) were the lone juniors on the team. Churchill played well on defense, securing six groundballs and causing two turnovers. "Olivia was a crucial part of our defense this year and will be looked upon to lead next season," stated Nepp. Stephen scored two goals and assisted on two more while securing 22 groundballs and 14 draw controls. "Melissa's hard work and dedication helped her mature this year and I look for her to be very strong next year," said Nepp. The sophomore class of defenders Rosemary O'Sullivan (Cold Spring Harbor/Cold Spring) and Jessica Sundberg (Acton, MA/Acton-Boxboro), and midfielder Jessica Giuricich (Blairstown, NJ/Blair Academy) proved to be the leaders of the future, with their solid contributions to this year's team. Despite missing four games due to injury, Giuricich, a team captain, scored 24 points on 11 goals and 13 assists, while adding 22 groundballs and 23 draw controls. "Her injuries were unfortunate and we missed her attacking ability around the net. I look for her to step up and lead us next year," stated Nepp. O'Sullivan and Sundberg were consistent defenders, combining to cause five turnovers. O'Sullivan also managed five points on four goals and one assist, while Sundberg notched one goal and secured 10 groundballs. "Sunny and Rose are very good defenders and complement each other well. I look to them to be the heart of our defense next season," said Nepp. Rounding out the team are three freshmen who saw considerable action in 2004: attackers Erin Brummer (Williamsville/Williamsville South) and Ashley Oliver (Bethel, ME/Gould Academy), and defender Jessica Dupuis (Chapel Hill, NC/Chapel Hill). Brummer

made an impact on the offensive end in 2004 by recording three goals, one assist and 10 groundballs. "Erin is another individual who had a very strong year and I expect her to be only get better next year," Nepp said. "From start to finish, Ashley and Squeaks (Dupuis) continued to get better. Their heart and aggressiveness has made them an asset to the team," stated Nepp. On the season Oliver and Dupuis combined for 18 groundballs, five draw controls and four caused turnovers. Oliver was also the backup goalie this year and will be looked upon next year to fill the void left by Dunster's graduation. With the loss of six senior starters, next season would appear to be a transition year for the Lady Saxons, but Nepp thinks otherwise. "I will miss the seniors on and off the field because of their leadership, but the talent of the underclassmen is very strong and I expect very big things from each one of them," Nepp said. "With the girls that are coming in next year and the talent on the team now, it is going to be exciting to see who will lead us in 2005."