

AU men's soccer team in dead heat with RIT for Empire 8 bid to NCAA tourney

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ALFRED The Alfred University men's soccer team is in a battle with RIT for the Empire 8 conference title and an automatic bid to the NCAA Division III tournament. The Saxons (7-1-2) have a 3-0-1 conference record and are ranked seventh in the latest National Soccer Coaches Association of America (NSCAA) Northeast Region poll, while sixth-ranked RIT (6-1-2) has a 4-0-1 conference mark. The tie-breakers for awarding the conference title are as follows: head-to-head record (AU and RIT played to a scoreless double-overtime tie at Alfred Sept. 26); most wins in conference play (AU has three with two conference games remaining, Wednesday, Oct. 10 at Elmira and Oct. 27 at Nazareth; RIT has four with one conference game remaining, Oct. 27 at home against Utica); fewest losses in Empire 8 play (neither team has lost a conference game.) Should AU and RIT remain even after the aforementioned tiebreakers, the conference would go to the final tie-breaker, goal differential in Empire 8 games, to determine the conference champion. The most a team can be awarded in goal differential for a single game is four. RIT holds a plus-9 goal differential against conference opponents, while AU holds a plus-6 differential. The largest differential RIT can accumulate would be plus-13, if the Tigers defeat Utica by four or more goals. If it comes down to goal differential, Alfred can win the conference title, regardless of how RIT fares against Utica, by defeating each of the last two conference foes Elmira and Nazareth by at least four goals. It is possible that the conference runner-up could still make the NCAA tournament field of 64 by being awarded an at-large bid.