

Saxons eye first-ever conference tournament berth

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With two games remaining in the 2004-05 regular season, the Alfred University men's basketball team has a chance to secure the program's first-ever berth in the Empire 8 Conference championship tournament. The teams with the top four conference records play in the conference championship, the winner of which earns an automatic bid to the NCAA Division III championship tournament. Alfred is currently in fifth place in the Empire 8 standings, with a 6-6 conference record, a half game behind Utica College and Ithaca College (each with 6-5 conference records). Alfred wraps up its regular season Friday at Utica and Saturday at Hartwick. If the Saxons win both games (and Utica loses at home to unbeaten and fifth-ranked St. John Fisher Saturday) they will finish the year with an 8-6 conference record and earn at least a fourth seed in the conference tournament. Depending on how Ithaca fares in its final three games (at home against Nazareth and RIT and at Elmira), Alfred could earn a third seed in the tournament. St. John Fisher has already wrapped up the top seed in the tournament and will host the semifinals Feb. 26 and championship Feb. 27. Fisher will take on the tournament's fourth seed in one semifinal, while second-seeded RIT will play the third-seeded team. The semifinal winners would meet for the conference tournament title and a bid to the NCAAs.