

## AU women's lacrosse team has experience, veteran leadership

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ALFRED, NY Seven starters return to the Alfred University women's lacrosse team in 2011 as AU looks to continue its steady improvement under fifth-year head coach Samantha Patton. In each of Patton's four seasons leading the Saxons, the team's win totals have improved from one season to the next. Patton hopes that trend continues and AU better its 7-8 (1-7 Empire 8) record from a season ago. AU did lose some key players from a year ago including attackers Abbey Schaffnit, the team's second-leading scorer, and Emily Tobin, the school's all-time leader in assists but a majority of the team's scoring from a season ago returns. Despite the absence of Schaffnit and Tobin from the front line, Alfred's offense will be potent, thanks to the return of senior attacker Michelle Adams (Horseheads, NY/Horseheads). The team's leading goal scorer each of her first three seasons at AU, Adams had 55 goals and seven assists last season and earned honorable mention from the Empire 8. She also had 31 groundballs and 33 draw controls. Adams will be joined at attack by senior Elyse Caldwell (Endwell, NY/Maine-Endwell), who had 23 goals and 15 assists (third on the team in both) to go with 31 groundballs and 20 draw controls. "Our offense is strong this year," Patton said. "(Adams) has very smart shot placement and provides solid leadership on the offensive end. (Caldwell) is extremely quick. We'll look to her for senior leadership and increased scoring." Sophomore attacker Ali Garcia (Salt Lake City, UT/Judge Memorial), a midfielder last season, had 19 goals (fourth-most on the team) as a freshman and will be counted on to share the scoring load. "She is a smart and well-rounded player who knows when to drive to the goal or settle the ball," Patton said of Garcia, who will take draws for the Saxons this season. Adams, who ranks in the top 10 in career goals and points, will get her goals. Key to improved success hinges in increased scoring output from other sources, including Caldwell and Garcia, and junior attackers Ivy Lam (Sanford, ME/Sanford) played in 11 games last year and scored four goals. Junior attacker Emily Crosby (Fairport, NY/Fairport) played in seven contests and had one goal. "All of our attackers can be scoring threats," Patton said, noting Lam's strong passing and shooting skills, which will be needed this year as the team seeks to replace the offense provide by the loss of Tobin and Schaffnit. Crosby, a role player her first two seasons, has shown improvement since her sophomore year and will be counted on to add increased scoring. Freshman Ashley Chow (Brooklyn, NY/Midwood) adds depth to the Saxon attack. Midfield will be a strength both offensively and defensively. Sophomores Tracie McGinnity (Rochester, NY/Gates-Chili) and Devin Fitzgerald (Rochester, NY/Greece Olympia) stated as freshmen and bring experience and leadership to the midfield. McGinnity (three assists, team-leading 52 groundballs and 20 caused turnovers) and Fitzgerald (seven assists), each netted 15 goals last season. "(McGinnity) is a complete player who should see her scoring go up and is probably out best all-around middle," Patton said. "(Fitzgerald) has one of the strongest shots on the team. We are relying strongly on her for our midfield transition." Freshman midfielder Ashley White (Islip, NY/Islip) will be counted on to step right in and provide scoring punch. "She is a very strong midfielder who can score. We will look for her to make an immediate impact," Patton said of White. Adding depth to the Saxons' midfield is freshman Lynn-Marie Veberka (Schroon Lake, NY/Schroon Lake). Defense took the biggest hit from graduation, with three four-year starters lost. "Despite losing a large number (of defenders), our defense is extremely strong, vocal and aggressive this year," Patton commented. The lone holdover from the starting defenders last year, junior Hannah Scott (Randolph, VT/Randolph Union) had 45 groundballs and 17 caused turnovers last year and was named an honorable mention Empire 8 all-star. Senior defender Jennifer Omilanowicz (Mexico, NY/Mexico) returns after taking last season off. A starter her first two seasons (2008 and 2009), she has eight goals, four assists and 46 groundballs for her career. "'Hannah is our leader on defense. She and (Omilanowicz) are strong, vocal defenders who see the field well," Patton said. Returning defenders looking to crack the starting lineup include juniors Molly Sullivan (Fonda, NY/Fonda-Fultonville) (six groundballs in 13 games last year) and Chelsea Gill (Winfield, PA/Lewistown) (limited action in four games in 2010). Newcomers competing for time on defense include freshmen Rebecca Spitz (Potomac Falls, VA/Potomac Falls) and Janelle Gallipeau (Rochester, NY/Greece Olympia). "(Sullivan) is one of our quickest defenders and can shut down the opponents' scoring threats. (Gill) has really developed into a strong defender and Gallipeau will be one of our best defenders. She has strong vocal skills and transitions well," Patton said. Senior Kate Baughman (Rush, NY/Rush-Henrietta) returns as a fourth-year starter in goal. She played every minute of every game last season and had a .471 save percentage and 11.49 goals against average. Patton lists strong leadership from upperclassmen along with a vocal defense and an offense that can score as the team's greatest strengths. She added that the team does need to improve on transitioning into the offensive end. "We can no longer rely on one or two players

as our main offense," she said.As has been the case each of her previous four seasons as coach, Patton looks for the team to improve its record from a season ago, while moving up in the Empire 8 Conference standings.