

Alfred University men's lacrosse team continues to improve

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ALFRED, NY -- The men's lacrosse team had an up-and-down season in 2007. The Saxons won three of their first four games the best start to a season since the 2004 squad began 5-1 before dropping six of seven, then winning its final two games to finish with a 6-7 record. AU went 1-6 in Empire 8 Conference play, with two of the losses at Hartwick and Utica coming by scores of 10-6 and 12-9. A 9-8 win over visiting Elmira in the season finale snapped a 20-game losing streak to Empire 8 foes. While the Saxons do lose some talented players, including five starters, 15 of 22 letterwinners return next season. With team depth expected to improve in head coach Jason Lockner's third season, AU has a solid chance at improving its standing in the Empire 8 and competing for one of the four berths in the conference's championship tournament in 2008. Alfred will miss its graduated seniors, which included three of the teams top points scorers: midfielder Jarrett Moffitt (Elmira, NY/Corning West) (Second Team Empire 8 all-star; 33 points, including a team-high 26 goals; team-best 50 groundballs; 47.7 percent on draws as the primary face-off man) and attackmen Jeff Andrews (Horseheads, NY/Horseheads) (team-leading 44 points on 24 goals and 20 assists) and Andy Aylward (Oswego, NY/Oswego) (21 points on 10 goals and 11 assists; two game-winning goals). The leadership of four-year starting defensemen Mike McCarthy (Kinnelon, NJ/Kinnelon) and James Powell (Corning, NY/Corning East), both two-year captains, is lost as well. Other seniors lost to graduation are three-year letterwinning goalie Drew Foster Pittsford, NY/Pittsford-Sutherland), who took over for injured starter Erick Goins (Colden, NY/St. Francis) in the seventh game and went 3-4 with a 11.58 goals against average and .488 saves percentage; and reserve Ben Cantor (Pembroke, NH/Kimball Union Academy) (14 groundballs). Despite the losses, there is plenty of talent returning. Junior midfielder and captain Andy Haynes (Rockford, MI/Rockford) hopes to follow up a solid campaign in 2007. A transfer from Alfred State College, Haynes had 28 points (17 goals, 11 assists) to go with 25 groundballs. Haynes will be joined at midfield next year by a quartet of youngsters who played well this year: sophomore Liam Glover (Savona, NY/Bath Haverling) (nine goals, eight assists; 27 groundballs; 40 percent on face-offs) and freshmen Mike Russo (Mattydale, NY/Cicero-North Syracuse) (13 goals, two assists), Mark Pincelli (Rochester, NY/Aquinas) (12 goals, three assists, 24 groundballs) and Kevin Fountain (Manlius, NY/Fayetteville-Manlius) (one assist, 21 groundballs). Pincelli (18-of-62) and Glover (18-of-45) will be the most experienced returning faceoff men. Other midfielders who saw significant playing time this year were junior Ed Leoni (Rochester, NY/Gates-Chili) (15 groundballs) and Sean Thompson (Grand Island, NY/St. Joseph's) (one goal, four groundballs). The Saxons will miss mainstays McCarthy (an Empire 8 honorable mention all-star this year) and Powell, but bring back four solid defenders in 2008. Junior Eric Thibault (West Seneca, NY/Bishop Timon), who suffered through injury woes his freshman and sophomore years, was healthy in 2007, starting 12 games and collecting 37 groundballs to go with an assist. Sophomores Scott Wunsch (Buffalo, NY/Sweet Home) (36 groundballs) and Jason Edwards (Geneva, NY/Geneva) (seven groundballs) continued to improve. Junior Andrew Clymer (East Aurora, NY/East Aurora), a transfer from Alfred State, had 12 groundballs and an assist in seven games before his season was ended by injury. The offense took a hit with the graduation of Andrews and Aylward, veterans who were four-year letterwinners and accounted for more than a quarter of the Saxons' goals in 2007. Hoping to fill the void at attack in 2008 will be juniors Jeremy Florence (Unionville, PA/Unionville) and Ben Coburn (Liverpool, NY/Liverpool). Florence, a transfer from Alfred State, started five games and tallied 14 points on 11 goals and three assists; Coburn had nine points on six goals and three assists. Other attackmen returning next season are sophomores Chad Melvin (Baldwinsville, NY/C.W. Baker) (goal, two assists) and James Lang (Chevy Chase, MD/Bethesda-Chevy Chase) (two goals). Goins, a junior, was solid before his injury, turning in a 3-2 record while logging a .625 save percentage and 7.47 goals against average. With his return and the continued improvement of the defensemen, AU has the foundation for a solid back line next year. Junior Jamie Waite (Elmira, NY/Notre Dame) returns as a backup goalie in 2008. Midfield should be a strength, with eight regulars (two starters) returning. Depth will be needed to bolster the attack, which has but four players (two letterwinners) coming back. The team's depth has improved greatly from a season ago. With a core of talented players joined by another group of recruits, the Saxons are poised to become a stronger force in the Empire 8.