

Alfred University Athletics enjoys outstanding fall season

12/01/17



The women's soccer team advanced to post-season Empire 8 play for the first time.

The Alfred University athletic department enjoyed a successful fall season, seeing three teams make the postseason while 26 student-athletes earned Empire 8 All-Conference accolades.

It was a historic season for Alfred University athletics, which saw two teams enter the Empire 8 Championships and one earn an Eastern Collegiate Athletic Conference bowl bid.

Women's soccer (7-9-3, 3-3-2 Empire 8), guided by first-year Head Coach Craig Yanni, earned its first Empire 8 Championship berth in program history in 2017. The team needed to earn a win heading into its final regular season game and defeated Utica College, 4-2, at home behind four goals from sophomore Lexi Riffelbach (Clifton Park, NY/Catholic Central). The performance tied a school record set by Deb Loveys &84 (against Keuka Sept. 29, 1982) and Kellie Hawks &99 against (Grove City, October 12, 1996). The Saxons were defeated by Hartwick, 3-0, in the Empire 8 semifinal match in Oneonta, NY.

Four women's soccer players were recognized by the Empire 8 following the historic season. Senior Sammy Jo Shanahan (Valley Stream, NY/Valley Stream South) was named to the Empire 8 All-Conference First Team while Riffelbach earned Second Team Honors. Junior Emily Wright (Dallas, TX/Plano West) and first-year Amanda Guariglia (Valley Stream, NY/Valley Stream South) were designated Empire 8 All-Conference Honorable Mentions. Shanahan was named the team's representative as the Empire 8 Sportswoman of the Year.

The women's volleyball team also made a historic run, making its way to the Empire 8 Championships for the first time since 2000. Led by first-year Head Coach Dakota Pruiss the team forced its way into the Empire 8 semifinals by defeating Utica, 3-0, in their regular season finale. The Saxons went on to fall to No. 1 Stevens Institute of Technology, 3-0, despite a strong start in the opening set.

AU was rewarded for their successful season with two players being placed on the All-Empire 8 team. Sophomore Amber Smith (Penfield, NY/Webster Schroeder) earned Second Team honors while senior Jacquelynn Hicks (Greenville, NY/Greenville) was named Honorable Mention. Junior Elisabeth Estep (Horseheads, NY/Horseheads) was named the Sportswoman of the Year for Alfred University.

The football team (8-3, 5-2 Empire 8) earned a bid to the ECAC James Lynah Bowl, marking the Saxon's twelfth appearance in an ECAC bowl game. AU triumphed over Stevenson University 29-16, earning its tenth ECAC bowl win in program history. The Saxons are 10-2 in ECAC bowls and 14-6 in postseason appearances, including NCAA and

ECAC postseasons.

Thirteen Saxons were recognized on the 2017 Empire 8 All-Conference Team. Seniors A.J. LiCata (Lake View, NY/Frontier) and Trevor Monk (Liverpool, NY/Liverpool) were named the Empire 8 Defensive Player of the Year and Special Teams Player of the Year, respectively. LiCata was also recognized on the Empire 8 All-Conference Team along with seniors Maleke Fuentes (Olean, NY/Olean) and Toby Hale (Swampscott, MA/Swampscott). LiCata was also named to a CoSIDA Academic All-District First Team honoree for the second consecutive year.

Nine Saxons earned a spot on the Empire 8 All-Conference Second Team: sophomore Merlin Thomas III (Albany, NY/Albany), junior wideout Jayden Gavidia (Homer, NY/Homer), senior tight end Jake Toomey (Malta, NY/Ballston Spa), Fuentes (all-purpose), senior offensive lineman Dean Lupo (East Northport, NY/Northport), senior Bobby Morris (Stillwater, NY/Stillwater), senior defensive lineman Ty Timmerman (Corning, NY/Corning East), first-year safety Raeqwon Greer (Buffalo, NY/Canisius) and Monk (place kicker). Sophomores Nick Milgate (Hilton, NY/Hilton) and Wes Senn (Randolph, NY/Randolph) were named Empire 8 Honorable Mentions while senior Rodney Etienne (Spring Valley, NY/Ramapo) was named the Sportsman of the Year for AU football.

Men's soccer (4-11-1, 3-3-1 Empire 8) narrowly missed the Empire 8 Championships under first-year Head Coach Tracy Blake, despite playing a tough schedule. Five Saxons were recognized by the Empire 8 Conference. Senior Miguel Reyes (Valencia, Venezuela/La Salle) was named to the All-Conference First Team while fellow seniors Cody Cronmiller (Livonia, NY/Livonia) and Sam Craver (Great Falls, VA/The Field School) were named Honorable Mentions. Junior Adam Taylor (Newton, NJ/Sussex County Tech) and sophomore Evan Merkey (Webster, NY/Webster Schroeder) were also named Honorable Mentions. Craver was named the men's soccer Sportsman of the Year.

The men's cross country team placed two runners on the Empire 8 All-Conference Team. Graduate Kyle Gallo (Ontario, NY/Wayne) earned First Team Honors after finishing third at the Empire 8 Cross Country Championships, recording the best finish in the event in over a decade for the Saxons. Senior Matthew Roder (Orchard Park, NY/Orchard Park) earned Empire 8 All-Conference Second Team honors as a result of finished 13th at the Empire 8 Championships. Both advanced to compete in the NCAA Northeast Regional Cross Country Championships.