

AU women's tennis coach hopes team can contend for conference title

9/01/04

ALFRED Alfred University women's tennis coach Brian Friedland has every reason to be optimistic about his team will be successful this season and is hopeful the Lady Saxons can contend for the Empire 8 Conference crown. One of the best players ever to play at Alfred, Alicia Ballard (Burlington, VT/Burlington) returns for her senior year. The reigning conference Player of the Year has a 32-5 career singles record and was 12-1 in singles play last year. Ballard has been a First Team conference all-star each of her three years at Alfred. "She's just the complete package," Friedland said of Ballard. "She has a great all-around game and is a wonderful leader." Also returning is sophomore Jodi Butterfoss (Elizabethtown, PA/Elizabethtown), who was named conference Rookie of the Year last season after posting a 9-3 mark at second singles. She and Ballard were First Team selections at doubles after logging a 8-1 mark in first doubles. "Jodi has an outstanding baseline game. She's a tough gritty player," Friedland commented. The coach is excited about the arrival of talented freshman Caitlin Calfee (Kirkwood, MO/Kirkwood). She comes to Alfred after an outstanding high school career in which she was ranked in her region her senior year. "She has no weaknesses," Friedland said. "She can play the baseline, she can volley and she can vary her serve." Friedland said Ballard will play first singles, while Calfee and Butterfoss will fill in the second and third spots. "Our top three are going to be very tough," he said. Much of the team's success will depend on how well the fourth, fifth and sixth singles players perform. Friedland is encouraged by the return of senior Beth Harris (Alfred/Alfred-Almond). She started two seasons before missing the 2003 campaign with a broken wrist. Harris, graduate student Krista Carlson (Alfred/Alfred-Almond) juniors Janice Brooks (The Bronx/Roosevelt) and Emily Salzberg (New York City/Masters School), sophomores Jamie Drooz (Pittsford-Mendon), Kelly Donahue (Glen Mills, PA/Garnet Valley), Charise Pastor (Irondequoit/Eastridge) and Corrine Wakeman (Marcellus/Marcellus) and freshman Desiree Woods (Bradford, PA/Bradford) will compete for the bottom three spots. Brooks had an 8-5 record in singles play last year (6-3 in fourth singles) and has a 23-13 mark for her career. Drooz had a 6-5 singles record (5-3 at fifth), while Wakeman was 3-1 and Salzberg 3-7 at sixth and third singles, respectively. "We have an experienced team," Friedland said. "But we're going to need consistency from the four, five and six spots. If we get that, we'll be tough to beat." Friedland hasn't yet decided who he will match up for doubles. Ballard and Butterfoss were outstanding in 2003, going 8-1 in first doubles. Calfee, a talented doubles player, could team with either. "It's going to be a difficult decision teaming them up," the coach said. Brooks and Drooz were 6-3 in second doubles and could find themselves paired again this year. Carlson, Wakeman and Salzberg will vie for time at doubles. Carlson and Wakeman were 2-3 in third doubles a year ago, while Carlson and Salzberg were 2-0 in third doubles. Harris is expected to compete for a spot in doubles as well. Friedland expects big things from his team. Just how big will depend on how the squad comes together from top to bottom, in singles and in doubles. He believes this year's squad could be better than the 2001 team that went 11-2. "This team is as good as that squad. We're certainly as deep and talented as that group," Friedland commented. "I'm optimistic we can compete for the (conference) title. I know we'll be right in the thick of things."