

AU swimming and diving teams off to solid start to 2002-03 season

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ALFRED The 2002-2003 Alfred University men's and women's swimming and diving teams are off to a great start to the 2002-03 season. The men won their season-opening dual meet against Nazareth, while the women barely lost their matchup with Nazareth. Then, at the Geneseo Invitational, the men finished first and the women second of four teams competing. Looking to continue the programs' success is first-year coach Brian Striker, a former All-American and Alfred University graduate. "I'm very optimistic as a first-year coach to become a part of team that exerts such a high level of energy and commitment from everyone," said Striker, a 2000 AU graduate. "Both men and women have stepped up to every challenge I have presented them with and continue to strive for higher goals." The men's team lost several key performers to graduation last year, but despite that there are three All-Americans and many key athletes returning to the squad that placed second in last year's state meet. "With a great deal of experience coming back and a handful of promising freshman, we hope to be a challenge at the conference championships," Striker exclaimed. Leading the men's team will be five talented seniors. Carl Schwarting (Weedsport/Weedsport) will play a critical role on all relays because of his strength and explosiveness. Justin Healy (Fayetteville/Jamesville-DeWitt) will also be an important part of the relay events, but will primarily concentrate on butterfly and sprint duties. Another senior who is a talented performer in the 200 butterfly and 400 IM is Brian Matt (New Hartford/New Hartford). Josh Chapman (Leicester/York) will lead the diving events. Frederico Gentry (Peoria, IL/Richwoods) will also be looked upon to step up his performance and be a strong competitor in the freestyle events. Juniors Matt Weems (Arlington, VA/Washington & Lee) and Bill Brown (Chaffee/Pioneer) will also be relied on heavily in freestyle events, while sophomore All-American Kevin Martin (Conesus/Livonia) will look to continue his success in the freestyle and butterfly events. Adding depth to the sprint events will be junior transfer Mike Coughlin (Ballston Lake/Shenendehowa). "Coughlin has been off for a few years, but joins the Saxons with a fresh outlook on the sport. He looks to be a prime competitor and one of the top sprinters we have this year," Striker commented. Freshman Jay Ferrio (Allentown, PA/Emmaus) will be counted on to excel in the backstroke events. "Freshman Brian Gotham (Syracuse/Nottingham) is our star incoming breaststroker who will fill a much needed position that has been lacking for the past few years. He will be a key component in our quest for a position at nationals in the medley relay," Striker said. Ross Munson (Groton/Lansing) and Glenn Jewell (Ithaca/Ithaca) "will be called upon to add depth to our distance events. Both freshmen bring a lot of talent to our program and will help create balance on our heavily loaded sprint team." Freshman Alex Crowell (Wayland, MA/Wayland) "is our star sprinting recruit who will be a key factor on freestyle relays and sprint events." Other returnees from last year include juniors Mike Dube (Williamsburg, VA/Lafayette), backstroke, Jack Stover III (Naples/Naples), freestyle and IM, and Matt McNamara (Livonia/Livonia), freestyle and IM; senior Andy Huray (Binghamton/Chenango Forks), breaststroke; and sophomores Nick Bradley (King Ferry/Southern Cayuga), backstroke, and Justin Kratz (Lansdale/North Penn), breaststroke. Freshmen John Charlwood (Foster, RI/Bishop Henricken), Matt Saunders (Springville/Springville), Jerome Mopsik (Philadelphia, PA/Friends Academy) and Ian Smith (Baldwinsville/C.W. Baker) and sophomore Mike Huffman (Ithaca/Lansing) will add depth to the freestyle events, while sophomores Peter Wachtel (Altamont/Guilderland) and Patrick O'Neill (Warren, PA/Warren) and freshman Jeff Grover (Cahrdon, OH/Chardon) will join Chapman to help bolster the Saxons' effort in the diving events. Setting the pace for the women's team will be a group of six seniors who will be called upon to demonstrate leadership qualities in and out of the pool. Carrie DeMay (Canandaigua/Canandaigua) will add experience to critical relays while senior Melissa McAllister (Hornell/Hornell) will look to continue the team's success in the backstroke and sprint events. Becky Cochran (Cuyahoga Falls, OH/Woodridge) is another senior who offers a lot to the team. "Cochran is a versatile swimmer that will compete in a variety of different events if needed," Striker stated. Senior Anne Martin (Wayne, NJ/Wayne Hills) is a powerful sprinter and a talented breaststroker that will be a key member of both the sprint and medley relays. Cheryl Junker (Meadville, PA/Meadville) and Lisa Rosa (Avoca, PA/Wyoming Seminary) are extremely versatile competitors. "Junker can swim any distance stroke event and excels in the IMs while Rosa is a solid freestyler who can sprint as well as swim the longer distance events," Striker added. Another key performer is junior Sara Thompson (Batavia/Batavia), who set two school records and earned All-American honorable mention honors last year. "Thompson will look to go back to nationals and hopefully some of her experience will rub off on her teammates," Striker added. Junior Becca Coppola (Takoma Park, MD/Montgomery Blair) is solid in the distance events, but also swims well in the 200 butterfly. Freshmen divers Amanda Martin

(Naples/Naples) and Kathleen Wittich (Pine Bush/Pine Bush) will seek to fill the void left by the graduation of standout Gretchen Jeitler. "We are hoping to pick up some much needed points in our diving events and are looking for these girls to place at our conference meet," Striker said. Freshman Rachel Saroka (Groton/Groton) is also a key addition to the team who will fill gaps on several critical relay teams. "We are excited to have junior Tabitha Maher (Lyme, CT/Waterford) back with us this season after taking a year off. Maher is back with a fresh outlook toward the team and will be a key member of sprint events," Striker stated. Freshman Bonnie McDermott (Grand Island/Mt. St. Marys) is another talented breaststroker who will compete in the individual medley events. Sophomore Lacy Clifford (Oil City/Oil City) will be counted on to follow up a successful freshman campaign by performing well in the backstroke events. Sophomores Lauren McCormack (Norwich/Norwich) and Elisabeth Meissner (Churchville/Byron-Bergen) and freshman Tara Mungro (Rochester/Wilson Magnet) will provide depth in the freestyle and breaststroke events, while freshman Rebecca Blood (Eden/Eden) will swim the breaststroke events. "With the talent that the women have returning and strong incoming freshmen, we hope to be more competitive in dual meet situations and place in the top five at our conference meet," said Striker. "The daily level of commitment and excitement is amazing. I feel that we will have a great start to our season."