

Saxon men's hoop team set to hit the court running

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ALFRED, NY — Following last year's 7-18 season (3-11 Empire 8), AU head men's basketball coach Dale Wellman and his players decided they would adopt a new playing style for the 2013-14 campaign.

"After the season last year, we made the conscious decision to play differently this year," said Wellman as he prepared for his sixth season as the team's head coach. "I couldn't wait to get back on the court and implement our new style."

Wellman explains that this style will promote fast play and aggressive defense while taking advantage of the depth of the Saxons' 21-man roster. AU opens its season on Saturday, Nov. 16, at 2 p.m. against visiting SUNY Cobleskill.

"We're really trying to get up and down the court and force tempo," says Wellman. "I love our depth. I want to utilize that. I thought it would be great to get more guys really into it. I thought it would be an easy style for them to buy into and for our freshmen to learn. We're playing more guys, so there's going to be a lot of key guys."

Key returnees like senior guard **Thomas Tsatsis (Neponsit, NY/Townsend Harris)**, senior forward **Jason Ruback (Pittsford, NY/Pittsford-Mendon)**, senior center **Gerald Colas (Houston, Texas/Cypress Ridge)**, and junior center **Dalton Walsh (Stockton, NY/Cassadaga Valley)** and junior point guard **Tim Pacheco (Mt. Pocono, PA/Pocono Mountain East)** should thrive in this system.

Tsatsis enters the season as the team's leading returning scorer (11.1 points per game) and as the team's leading returning rebounder (3.2 per game). Pacheco, who joins Tsatsis as returning starters, averaged 4.6 points, 2.7 rebounds and a team-best two assists per game last year.

Colas was hurt early last year and returned to play in 15 games (six starts), averaging 6.3 points and 2.9 rebounds. Ruback saw time in all 25 games (three starts) and averaged 8.5 points (second-most among returnees) and 3.2 boards (tied for most among returnees); and Walsh averaged 5.1 points and 2.8 rebounds.

Junior center **Jeremy Johnson (Martinsburg, WV/Martinsburg-Shepherd University)** saw time in 14 games last year (averaging 1.4 points and 1.6 rebounds, and is expected to take on a greater role this season. Other returnees include junior guards **Mike Hill (Whitesboro, NY/Utica Notre Dame)**, **Ryan Mahon (Oneonta, NY/Oneonta)** and **Mike Snyder (Pulaski, NY/Pulaski)**; sophomore guard **Jerry Kincel (Moosic, PA/Riverside)**; and senior center **Steve Lothridge (East Syracuse, NY/East Syracuse-Minoa, Onondaga CC)**. Lothridge played in 23 games last year, starting 14, and averaged 2.9 points and 2.8 rebounds.

Wellman welcomes a group of 10 freshmen to the team, many of whom will have the opportunity to step in and contribute right away. They include guards **Tyler Seelman (Lorton, VA/Hayfield Secondary)**, a strong shooter, and **Julian Reinhart (Hornell, NY/Hornell)**, a solid defender.

Other freshmen include: guards **Nigel Herbert (Hillsborough, NJ/Hillsborough)**, **Dylan Molloy (Clifton Park, NY/Shenendehowa)** and **Darius Sessom (Olive Branch, MS/Olive Branch)**; guard-forwards **Tyrell Ryan (Wheatley Heights, NY/Half Hollow Hills West)**, **Phil Pellegino (Rochester, NY/Brighton)** and **Clark Brueckl (Angola, NY/Lake Shore)**; and forward **Spenser Thomas (Webster, NY/Webster Thomas)**.

Wellman says his players are looking forward to pitting their new playing style against other teams.

“They have completely bought into the system and are really excited to show people what they can do,” he said. “We shoot well from outside. We’re fast, we’re long. We’re going to have to bring the intensity we want for 25 games. We have to be gritty and nasty. We can’t have any down days.”