

## Men's basketball enjoys one of team's best seasons ever

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Despite not realizing its goal of making the NCAA national championship tournament, the Alfred University men's basketball team enjoyed one of the best seasons in program history in 2014-15.

The Saxons made it all the way to the championship game of the Empire 8 Conference tournament, where they lost, 77-62, to host St. John Fisher on Saturday. A win would have earned AU the conference's automatic bid to the NCAAs.

On Monday, the team made the decision not to pursue a spot in one of Eastern College Athletic Conference (ECAC) championships. The Upstate region, which AU traditionally competes in for ECAC championships, did not have enough eligible teams to hold a tournament, which means the Saxons would have had to travel out of region to compete.

"Alfred University's men's basketball team chose not to participate in the ECAC Championships when it was determined that the Saxons, according to ECAC rule, were ineligible to host in any of the other regions all of which would have required significant travel regardless of our numerous accomplishments or how high our seed would have been," said [Paul Vecchio](#), Director of Athletics. "Head coach Russ Phillips, his team and myself, based on the academic priorities of mid-semester exams and papers, chose not to participate in the event, particularly because of the fact we would have had to travel and play on Wednesday night."

Vecchio expressed disappointment the Saxons could not build on the success of this season, but said missing out on an ECAC tournament berth wouldn't detract what the team has achieved this year. "I am extremely proud of the efforts of our team, of the incredible support we saw this season particularly this weekend at St. John Fisher from our students, faculty, staff, administration and alumni, and the work of our coaching staff to have one of the finest seasons in Alfred University men's basketball history," Vecchio said.

The 2014-15 season was indeed historical for the Saxons. Picked sixth in the Empire 8 preseason coaches' poll, the Saxons went 11-5 in league play to earn the second seed in the conference championship tournament. Among its league wins was a home victory over then 16<sup>th</sup>-ranked Fisher on Feb. 17. Making its second straight E8 tournament appearance (the first came last season), the Saxons topped Hartwick in a semifinal matchup for the program's first-ever Empire 8 tournament win. The Saxons came back from a big first-half deficit against Fisher in the title game, and led briefly in the second half before falling to the top-seeded Cardinals.

The Saxons finished the year 19-8, with the 19 victories representing the most in a single-season since the 1988-89 team went 19-8. The 19 wins is also tied with the 88-89 squad for the third-most in team history, and the 11 conference wins are the most ever for a Saxon team.

AU had two Empire 8 all-stars, marking the first time since 2005 an Alfred team has had multiple all-conference selections. Senior forward [Dalton Walsh](#) (Stockton, NY/Cassadaga Valley), was named to the First Team, the first time the Saxons have had a First Team E8 pick since 2005, while [Tyler Seelman](#) (Lorton, VA/Hayfield Academy), a sophomore guard, was selected to the Second Team.

The Saxons will miss the contributions of its four senior letterwinners. Walsh led the team in scoring (15.9), rebounding (9.1) and blocks (2.0), while four-year starting point guard [Tim Pacheco](#) (Mt. Pocono, PA/Pocono Mountain East) averaged 6.1 points, 3.5 rebounds and team-best 2.7 assists. Guard [Ryan Mahon](#) (Oneonta, NY/Oneonta) (2.2 assists per game) and [Mike Snyder](#) (Pulaski, NY/Pulaski) (25 three-pointers made) were invaluable off the bench, averaging 2.6 and 3.5 points, respectively, and playing solid defense.

A solid nucleus, led by Seelman 15.8 points per game with a team-best 82 three-pointers and 37 steals returns. Two other starters sophomore guard [Julian Reinhart](#) (**Hornell, NY/Hornell**) and sophomore forward [Eric Adams](#) (**Lebanon, NJ/Hunterdon**) are set to return in 2015-16. Reinhart averaged 8.1 points and 3.5 rebounds; Adams averaged 7.4 points and 6.3 boards (second on the team).

A group of talented bench players, including freshman forward [Kevin McFall](#) (**Hatboro, PA/Upper Moreland**) and junior guard [Jerry Kincel](#) (**Mossic, PA/Riverside**) also return, as does freshman shooting guard [Nick Schmidt](#) (**Olean, NY/Olean**). McFall, Walsh's backup in the post, averaged 6.2 points on 61 percent shooting and pulled down 3.6 rebounds per game; Kincel, who scored a career-high 21 points in a key E8 win at home against Stevens, averaged 5.7 points and 2.5 rebounds; and Schmidt, who began his career with a 23-point performance in a season-opening win over SUNY-ESF, averaged 3.7 points and made 25 three-point shots.