

RPI edges Saxons, 34-31, to claim ECAC Northwest Bowl title

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TROY, NY The Alfred University football team lost to host RPI, 34-31, in Saturday's afternoon's ECAC Northwest Bowl Championship game. RPI scored with just over four minutes left in the fourth to hand the Saxons their first defeat in five ECAC Bowl games dating back to 2004. With Alfred leading, 31-27, RPI faced fourth-and-goal from the Saxon 26-yard line. AU senior cornerback Ron Smith (Lyons, NY/Lyons) intercepted RPI quarterback Jimmy Robertson at the AU 2-yard line, but the Saxons were flagged for pass interference and RPI was given a first down at the Alfred 12-yard line. On the next play, Robertson hit Ray Davis on a 12-yard scoring pass to put the Engineers on top. On Alfred's ensuing drive, the Saxons made it to midfield before freshman quarterback Tom Secky (Bemus Point, NY/Maple Grove) was intercepted at the RPI 22-yard line. RPI gained a pair of first downs before running out the clock. RPI led most of the game, scoring first on a one-yard Robertson run with 11:25 left in the first. A 26-yard field goal by AU freshman kicker Eric Rockwood (Allegany, NY/Allegany-Limestone) made it 7-3 midway through the opening frame, but RPI answered five minutes into the second when Robertson connected with Davis on a 45-yard scoring pass to make it 14-3. The Saxons answered quickly on their next drive, with Secky tossing a 64-yard TD pass to junior wide receiver Jared Manzer (Johnson City, NY/Johnson City) on Alfred's first play from scrimmage. RPI pushed its lead back to 11 points, at 21-10, with 3:16 left in the half. The Engineers recovered a fumble at the AU 3-yard line and four plays later, tailback Nick Costa plowed in from two yards out. Alfred scored with 49 seconds remaining in the half when Secky connected with senior wideout Trevor Bork (Fishers, NY/Victor) on a 26-yard TD pass to cap a 10-play, 69-yard drive. The PAT failed and Alfred trailed 21-16. RPI started its ensuing drive at its own 43 and, after a pair of long passes, had a first down at the Alfred 15-yard line with under a minute to go. After three incomplete passes, RPI's Peter Nilson booted a 32-yard field goal with 15 seconds left to give his team a 24-16 lead heading into halftime. AU tied the contest with just over six minutes left in the third. Junior tailback Vinson Hendrix (Rochester, NY/East) scored on a one-yard run to cap a six-play, 50-yard drive. Secky connected with senior tight end Rahsaan Parks (Binghamton, NY/Binghamton) on the two-point conversion to make the score 24-24. RPI got the lead back when Nilson nailed a 22-yard field goal with 3:29 left in the third to make it 27-24. AU went on top for the first time in the game, 31-27, midway through the fourth when Secky threw a 20-yard TD pass to Bork to end a five-play, 68-yard drive. RPI would score on its ensuing drive to claim the win and end its season with an 8-2 record. Alfred finishes 7-4. AU outgained RPI, 512-398, as the Saxons held a 175-105 advantage in rushing yards and a 337-293 advantage through the air, but Alfred was hurt by turnovers (three) and penalties (seven for 79 yards). Secky finished with 337 yards and three touchdowns on 19-of-32 passing. He ends a stellar freshman campaign with 2,869 passing yards and 27 TD passes, both AU freshman records and the second-most all-time for a single season at Alfred. Bork's 90 yards on six catches gives him 2,555 for his career, a new AU record. Manzer had four catches (extending his school single-season record to 69) for 138 yards and a score. Junior wideout Milton Harding (Binghamton, NY/Johnson City) had five catches for 64 yards. Senior tailback Morgan O'Brien (Bradford, PA/Bradford) rushed for 91 yards on 19 carries and Hendrix had 58 yards rushing and a score. In his final game, O'Brien went over the 1,000-yard rushing mark for his career. Robertson finished with 257 yards passing and two TDs for RPI. Davis had nine catches for 197 yards and two scores. Costa rushed for a game-high 113 yards on 32 carries. Freshman linebacker Nick Clark (Canisteo, NY/Canisteo-Greenwood) had eight tackles (five solo) to lead the Saxon defense. His three tackles for loss

gives him 22 for the season. Senior linebacker John Soule (Richfield Springs, NY/Richfield Springs) had nine tackles and freshman end Marcellus Jones (Lancaster, NY/Lancaster) had eight stops and Smith and senior free safety Brian Nitsche (Portville, NY/Portville) each had an interception. Joe Albano had a game-high 13 tackles to lead RPI. Tim Acker and Justin Foglia each added interception.