

# ON THE SLATE

**St. John Fisher (6-3, 4-1 E8)**

**VS.**

**Alfred University (6-3, 3-2 E8)**

SPECIAL EDITION

# Thank you, Springfield

*Pride defeat Hartwick to give Fisher chance at winning E8, NCAA bid*

STAFF WRITER  
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The regular season ends this Saturday but for the St. John Fisher football team, the playoffs have already begun. And thanks to Springfield's upset victory over Hartwick last week, the Cardinals now control their own destiny.

Fisher needs to win at Alfred University this weekend to clinch a share of the Empire 8 conference title and its third consecutive NCAA Tournament appearance.

"This is the biggest game of the year; if we win we're Empire 8 champs," Fisher sophomore quarterback Tim Bailey said. "This does not change the way we approach the game though. Alfred's a great team who are right up there in the standings with us."

Hartwick, Ithaca, Fisher and Alfred each entered last weekend with one loss in the conference. Hartwick, which defeated both Fisher and Alfred by a combined eight points, needed to win its final two games to all but seal the conference title. But after losing 45-31 to Springfield, Hartwick (6-2, 3-2 E8) now needs some help.

And after Ithaca (8-1, 5-1) defeated Alfred (6-2, 3-2) last weekend, only the Bombers and Fisher remain as one-loss teams in the conference. The Cardinals (6-3, 4-1) hold the tie-breaker over Ithaca with a victory over the Bombers in September.

"All we can do is focus on our schedule and hopefully everything plays out the way we want it to," Fisher coach Paul Vosburgh said. "Alfred's a good football team and will be fired up for us. They are capable of playing great defense and can move the ball offensively; we will have our hands full."

The Cardinals have advanced to the NCAA Tournament three of the last four years, including last year when they went all the way to the quarterfinals before losing to Mount Union.

"This game has become a championship game for both teams," Vosburgh said. "Alfred and Fisher have both had some heartbreaking losses this year and now we're both in the same position, needing a win."

The only thing for certain is that the Empire 8 is once again one of the most competitive conferences in Division III football.

"Every year it's extremely competitive," Alfred coach Dave Murray said. "Fisher, Hartwick, and Ithaca are three tremendous football teams and we're working to crack into that group. It is going to be an exciting finish to the season."

The Cardinals opened the season with nine consecutive games before getting a week off. And now that the time has come, Fisher has enjoyed the rest.

"It's been a good week of practice and the weather has been cooperating nicely; that really helped us to get ready," Bailey said. "We're trying to work on a few specific things, especially getting the ball to Jimmy (Smith) and Timmy (Marion) more. They are our big playmakers."

Smith and Marion have averaged about five touches per game but the Fisher quarterback hopes to put the ball in their hands even more against Alfred.

Smith leads the team with 631 yards and three touchdowns on 41 receptions, and Marion has 617 yards and six scores on 35 catches.

Fisher's two senior wideouts have also helped other playmakers emerge. Receivers Dan Witkowski and Paul Deckard have combined for seven touchdowns and are both averaging more than 25 yards per catch.

"We have quite a bit of weapons," Bailey said. "And when you throw in a great running back like (Brad) Carlton, who has been doing a good job, you have a pretty dynamic offense."

**Containing the Saxons**

Alfred is led by freshman quarterback Tom Secky, who has tossed for 1,849 yards and 18 touchdowns while completing almost 60 percent of his passes.

Secky has a great arm and good field presence but is still learning the ropes of Division III football.

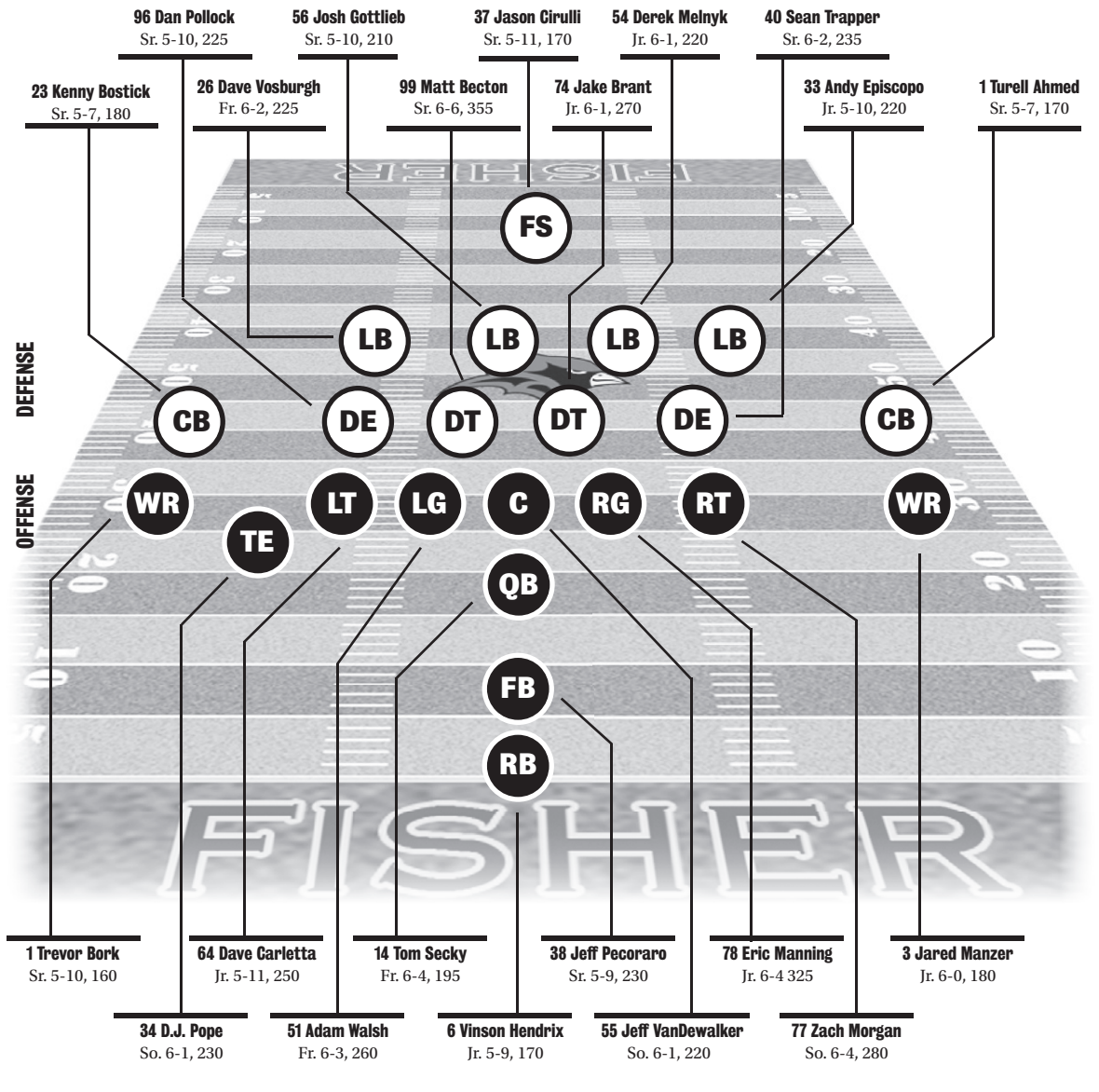
"He's a freshman so he continues to improve all the time," Murray said. "He's managing the football game extremely well for a freshman at this point and he's been able to limit turnovers. He is playing beyond his years right now."

Secky will be looking for his favorite target, speedy receiver Jared Manzer, who leads the Saxons with 50 catches for 694 yards and six touchdowns. Murray hopes to give Manzer plenty of opportunities to get the ball in open space for a chance to break some big plays.

"I think in any big football game turnovers and big plays determines who wins and who loses," Murray said. "We have to be able to play a physical football game. We have to battle for good field position."

The Cardinals are 5-5 all time against Alfred and have won the previous two meetings.

## When Alfred has the ball



## When Fisher has the ball

