

# Alma gets early start

By C.J. Rieck  
Staff writer

Dean Ulrich is ready for football season to begin. So are 37 of his Alma College teammates.

Ah, but fall is months away. And Alma is a member of the NCAA's Division III, which doesn't even allow spring football practices.

But the Scots won't have to wait. For them, the season begins next week.

Alma is already practicing for a two-game spring season. And, no, the Scots are not a late entry into the USFL. Their foes will be transatlantic ones. Alma will also have the distinction of playing in the first bowl game of the new season.

It's called the Arctic Bowl. It will be played in Oulu, Finland, on June 4. Alma's opponent: the Finnish Northern Lights, champions of the Finnish football league. The Scots will then play Finland's national all-stars on June 7 in Helsinki.

EVEN THE MOST avid of football fans are probably unaware that organized American football existed in Finland. Ulrich is not a different.

"I had no idea they played it," said Alma's starting quarterback, a Rochester graduate now finishing his sophomore season. "I understand there are some U.S. players over there."

Other Scots with local backgrounds who will be making the trip are linebacker Ric Koler, defensive tackle Dwight Spengler and tight end David Belezut, all of Rochester; defensive end Mike Bowen from Farmington Hills; and wide receiver Joe Molner from Troy.

Alma was selected to make the trip following a banner season in which it finished second to Hope College in the Michigan Intercollegiate Athletic Association (MIAA). The Scots were 6-3 overall and were ranked among the top 20 nationally in 10 offensive categories.

COACH PHIL BROOKS applied to Athletic Enterprises, the company promoting American-European football, and with the approval of the NCAA and the MIAA commissioner Alma was selected.

"I like it," Ulrich said of the opportunity. "I like to play football year round. I get out with some of my teammates and start throwing the ball around as soon as it gets warm."

"This should help us next season."

too. It's just like a training session for next year."

Alma is allowed 10 practices prior to leaving for Finland. Brooks is making the most of his time by putting the Scots through three-hour sessions.

"We're concentrating on passing and running drills, not full-team contact," explained Ulrich. "Everybody is really anxious to play. We'd like to keep going right after getting back from Finland."

CONSIDERING ALMA'S superb season last year, it's no surprise the Scots are ready to get started. This preseason test will help to get them going, not only allowing them a spring practice but also providing a chance to experience a different style of football and, perhaps, pick up something new.

"I'm not sure of any different rules, except that the field is about five yards wider and 10 yards longer," Ulrich said. "These are alterations Ulrich, the passer, doesn't mind a bit. They should help me. They can put those changes in right now over here."

Neither team really knows what to expect. "A lot will rely on surprising the other team," Ulrich said. "We don't have much of an idea what to expect. The Finnish coach called and exchanged some information with our coach so we'd have a little idea what the other team does."

"We'll be looking for some new tricks, too, for next year."

ALMA'S PLAYERS have had to finance part of the trip themselves, raising approximately \$1,300 for each team member in transportation costs. Part of that sum was raised in a Lift-A-Thon, staged Feb. 4-5 by the team. Pledges were taken for pounds lifted during the weekend.

The Scots have also received the backing of local businesses to help defray the costs. AML Sports International will provide room and board for the 50-person traveling party, with players staying with Finnish families as live-in guests.

Everything considered, the series will provide a unique experience for Alma's griders. They'll have a chance to visit Finland and see how football is played on a foreign soil.

And yet for Ulrich, there's another opportunity to consider: "I just like to play football."

No matter where the game is.



STEPHEN CANTRELL/staff photographer

Ken Allard, assistant pro at Birmingham CC, placed among the top 18 golfers at a recent U.S. Open qualifying tournament.

# Local pro earns shot at U.S. Open

By Marty Budnor  
Staff writer

Signing a couple autographs. Tossing a few golf balls to the kids. Playing beautiful courses. Meeting some of the top touring pros.

That's what it's like for non-touring pros like Ken Allard to participate in one of professional golf's premier events such as the U.S. Open, which, this year, will be hosted by the Oakland Hills Country Club June 18-16. Allard, assistant professional at the Birmingham Country Club, fondly remembers those moments and hopes to experience them again. Preferably next month at neighboring Oakland Hills.

The 36-year-old Allard took a major step in that direction by placing among the top 18 golfers at last week's local U.S. Open Qualifying Tournament played at the Travis Point and Wash-tonaw golf clubs.

John Traub, head pro at Rochester's Great Oaks Country Club, and Bob Makoski from West Bloomfield's Knollwood Country Club, are two other area pros who rose to the top 18 from a field of 174 at the local qualifier.

Allard, Traub and Makoski now must prepare themselves for Sectional Qualifying. There are a dozen of the 36-hole Sectional tournaments — involving a combined total of 600 golfers — scheduled to be played after May 30 and before June 4.

If they make the Sectional cuts, Allard, Traub and Makoski would then qualify for the U.S. Open. It will be tough since there are only 105 spots available from among those 600 golfers.

ALLARD and Traub have previous experience in the U.S. Open play.

A long-driving former national Club Pro Champion, Traub participated in

the 1982 Open at Pebble Beach in California. He shot a 155 over the first two rounds and missed the cut by four strokes.

Allard played in the 1976 Open at the Atlanta Athletic Club and the 1977 tournament at Southern Hills in Tulsa. He missed the cut on both occasions.

"I've tried to qualify every year since then but haven't had much luck," said Allard, who grew up in southern Florida. "Over the past five years I haven't gotten past the locals. . . I've missed by one, two or three strokes every year."

Allard will play his Sectional qualifier at the par-72 Sharon Golf Club in Ohio.

"It's a tough course," insisted Allard. "I think a score of 144 or 145 will be close enough to qualify."

At last week's locals, Traub shot rounds of 71 and 76 for a 147 total, tying for seventh place behind co-winners Todd Greenlee and Randy Erskine. Allard shot 74-74 (148) to tie for ninth place while Makoski came in at 79-70 (149) and tied for 12th.

Allard said he might have played this year's qualifier with a little more desire since the Open will be played in his own back yard.

"I might have been a little more determined this year. I played well," he said. "Being that the championship (Open) is right down the street, I might have thought about that a little more."

"This year I said to myself, 'I've played in a couple of these U.S. Opens, wouldn't it be nice to play in front of my friends?' I think it would be a lot of fun to play in it. I was working a little harder this year."

I guess I was thinking about the Open at Oakland Hills," he said. "I think that little extra concentration really helped."

# State's best gymnasts gather at regional

Twenty-six Michigan gymnasts will be competing this Saturday and Sunday in the men's United States Gymnastics Federation (USGF) Regional Meet at Eastern Michigan University's Warner Gymnasium.

Michigan will be represented by 12 Class III gymnasts, 12 Class II, one Class I and one Junior Elite. Class III compulsories will commence at 3:30 p.m. Saturday (June 1) with optionals at 11 a.m. Sunday (June 2). For all other classes, compulsories are at 7:30 p.m. Saturday with optionals at 2:30 p.m. Sunday.

Six states make up the regional: Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio and Michigan.

Michigan's lone Class I gymnast is Chris Jeannotte of Plymouth. Jeannotte, who trains out of the Farmington Gymnastics Club, needs to score 95 or better to qualify for the USGF National Meet.

CLASS II gymnasts also need to score at least 95 to qualify for nationals. Also, the top six Class II scores will earn a spot on the regional team.

Among Michigan's Class II competitors is state champ Brian Halstead of Lansing and Adrian Besancon of Livonia — both competing for the Great Lakes Gymnastics Club. Bret Trochlo, Robby Thomas, David Thomas and Mark Miesal will represent Farmington Gymnastics Center.

For the Class III gymnasts, the regional meet is the highest level of competition. The top Class III performers from the regional will earn special training sessions at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado.

John Besancon and Jason Whitfield of Livonia will compete at the Class III level, as will Doug Stibel (Livonia) and Nate Blackburn from the Farmington Gymnastics Center.

Terry Gillespie of Great Lakes Gymnastics Club in Lansing will Michigan's lone Junior Elite. Gillespie has qualified for the McDonald's Championships of the U.S. where the United States National Team is selected. Last month, he signed a national letter of intent to attend the University of Nebraska.

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