

Men's Basketball Faces Tough Task In Conference Tourney

Posted: Sunday, February 19, 2006

EAU CLAIRE - The No.8 seed UW-Eau Claire men's basketball team will travel to face the top-seeded UW-Whitewater Warhawks on Tuesday night in the first round of the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (WIAC) tournament with the action beginning at 7 p.m.

The Blugolds ended the regular season with a 12-13 overall record and a 4-12 WIAC record. The Warhawks finished with a 19-5 overall record and a 13-3 conference record. The Warhawks swept the two regular season meetings between the two teams but it wasn't easy.

In the first meeting it was the Warhawks winning in Whitewater 70-62 with the game coming down to the final minutes. The Warhawks then beat the Blugolds on Saturday in the final regular season game, in double overtime 91-88. Both teams had their chances to win in regulation and the first overtime.

The Blugolds will be led by **Jared Bardon** (*So.-DeForest, WI*) who leads the team in scoring, averaging 14.9 points per game, which is fifth-best in the conference. Bardon had a game-high 24 points against the Warhawks on Saturday. Bardon was just held to two points against Whitewater in the first meeting.

Look for **Zack Ryan** (*So.-Lake Elmo, MN/Tartan*) to be a factor for the Blugolds as he had 18 points in the loss on Saturday and made a clutch 3-pointer to send the game into a second overtime. Ryan averaged 18.5 points per game against the Warhawks this season.

The Blugolds finished second in the conference in 3-pointers made, averaging just under seven per game. The Blugolds finished third in offensive rebounds, as the team averaged over 11 per game.

The Warhawks ended the regular season on a six-game winning streak. They will be led by Jeremy Manchester who is averaging 12.7 points per game. Manchester hit two free throws with 0.01 seconds left in regulation to send the game into overtime against the Blugolds on Saturday. He is second in the conference in 3-point percentage as he has connected on 47% of his 3-point shots.

Whitewater brings the top-scoring offence into the tournament as it is averaging 76 points per game. The Warhawks are also on the top of the conference in turnover margin, committing almost three fewer turnovers than they are forcing.

The Warhawks lost in the tournament championship game last year to UW-Stevens Point 87-77. The Warhawks have appeared in the tournament championship game in three of the last four years and have yet to win a tournament title.

The Blugolds have won one WIAC conference tournament title back in 2001, defeating UW-Oshkosh 76-63.

The Blugolds are 1-6 in the past seven trips to Whitewater with the team's last win coming last year on a buzzer-beating layup.

The first round action between the Blugolds and the Warhawks gets underway at 7 p.m. Tuesday night.

First WW game story and box

Second WW Game story and box

WIAC Tournament site

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