

# Softball Ready For Conference Tournament

*Posted: Wednesday, May 3, 2006*

EAU CLAIRE - The sixth-ranked UW-Eau Claire softball team will compete in the 2006 Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (WIAC) Softball Championships this Friday and Saturday hosted by UW-Stout.

The winner of the conference tournament receives an automatic bid to the NCAA Division III tournament.

The Blugolds captured their third straight regular season conference title last Saturday by sweeping a doubleheader against UW-Oshkosh. No other team in WIAC history has ever won three straight conference regular season titles.

The Blugolds, however, have not won a conference tournament title since the 2000 season. Last year, the Blugolds lost twice to UW-Stout in back-to-back games to finish second.

This season the Blugolds have compiled a 30-4 overall record and finished unbeaten in conference play at 14-0. The Blugolds have won 24 of their last 25 games and have won 17 consecutive regular season conference games over the past two years.

The Blugolds are the No.1 seed in the tournament, which may not be a good thing. No top-seeded team has won the WIAC tournament title since UW-Whitewater did it in 1999. The Blugolds do receive a first round bye and will face the winner of the UW-River Falls and UW-Stout game.

The Blugolds are led by pitcher **Mallory McKinney** (*Jr.-Brooklyn Park, MN/Champlin Park*). This season McKinney has broken school records for career strikeouts and most shutouts in a season. McKinney has the ninth lowest earned run average in the country at 0.56. She is also ranked fourth nationally in wins with 19 and has 127 strikeouts this season, seven shy of the team season record of 134 she set last year.

At the plate, the Blugolds are led by **Rachel Paulus** (*Jr.-Wisconsin Rapids, WI/Lincoln*), who has a batting average of .412. Paulus leads the conference in stolen bases with 15 and the Blugolds as team lead the conference in stolen bases with 46.

**Jill Janke** (*So.-Black River Falls, WI*) is the only other batter hitting over .400 as she is batting .404. Janke was big in both victories over UW-Oshkosh on Saturday as she had the game winning hits in both games.

**Casey Leisgang** (*So.-Seymour, WI*) leads the team in home runs with eight and leads the conference in runs scored with 36. The Blugolds are currently tied for the team record for home runs in a season with 28.

Against conference opponents this season, the Blugolds were pushed to extra innings three times and finished in less than seven innings on four occasions.

Including the #8 UW-River Falls vs. #9 UW-Stout matchup, other first round matchups are #2 UW-Oshkosh vs. #7 UW-Stevens Point, #3 UW-Whitewater vs. #6 UW-Platteville, and #4 UW-Superior vs. #5 UW-La Crosse.

The tournament gets underway at 9 a.m. Friday at Wakanda Park in Menomonie. The Blugolds first game is scheduled to begin around 1 p.m.

Tournament Web Site

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