

## Blugolds Top Seed In Seed Four Regional

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The UW-Eau Claire softball team is the top seed for the Seed No. 4 Regional which will be played at Rock Island, Illinois beginning Thursday.

The Blugolds, 34-4 for the season, earned a bid into the 59-team NCAA Division III tournament by winning the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference's post-season tournament this past weekend.

The Blugolds will open play in the double elimination regional tournament with the 10 a.m. game Thursday against Lake Forest College, the Midwest Conference's automatic qualifier. Lake Forest is 24-13 for the season and seeded eighth in the regional.

The other regional participants include host Augustana College; Coe College of Iowa; Aurora University of Illinois; Central College of Iowa; the University of Chicago and Hope College of Michigan.

In the 12 noon game Thursday, Central (32-11) meets fourth-seeded Aurora (36-9). Third-seeded Coe (34-10) takes on Chicago (19-13) at 2 p.m. and in the final first-round contest, second-seeded Augustana (33-8) meets Hope (30-12). Aurora, Central, Coe and Chicago were at-large selections in the tournament which expanded from 43 teams last year. Augustana won the CCIW title and Hope the Michigan Intercollegiate Athletic Conference crown.

Eau Claire is making its first NCAA tournament appearance since 2000 and its fifth overall. The Blugolds also were represented in 1997, 1998 and 1999. The Blugolds won regional championships in both 1999 and 2000 and finished fourth in the national tournament both years.

The Blugolds became the first team in conference history to win three consecutive regular season championships and the first to go through the regular conference season unbeaten since the league expanded to a round robin format. The Blugolds finished 14-0 in WIAC play, four games ahead of second-place UW-Oshkosh which was 10-4.

This has been a record-setting year for the Blugolds. They set a school record with an 18-game win streak, breaking the old mark of 12 set last year. They currently are working on a 10-game win streak which is the fourth longest in school history. They have won 28 of their last 29 games since starting the season 6-3.

Three of the Blugolds' four losses have come against teams who were selected for the NCAA tournament. The Blugolds lost 3-2 and 5-3 decisions to two-time defending national champion St. Thomas and split a twin bill with the College of St. Scholastica which is also participating.

The Blugolds will start next season with a 17-game regular season conference win streak and have won 18 consecutive games against WIAC opponents after breezing through the conference tournament with a 4-0 mark following their 14-0 league campaign.

The Blugolds' current win total is the fourth best in school history, exceeded only by the 40-14 mark in 1999, 40-15 mark in 2005 and 35-8 record in 1997.

The Blugolds have hit 33 home runs this year, breaking the mark of 28 set last year. Sophomore **Casey Leisgang** (*Seymour*) broke the single season home run record of 10 set by Jill Schoenike in 1999 with 11 thus far. She has led off five games with round-trippers. Teammates **Mallory McKinney** (*Jr.-Brooklyn Park, MN/Champlin Park*) and **Amber Haack** (*Jr.-Madison/LaFollette*) each have belted seven dingers and eight different players have slammed at least one homer. The Blugolds set a conference record with seven home runs in one game against UW-Platteville.

The Blugolds' .964 defensive percentage is ahead of the school record of .960 set in 2001. The Blugolds' pitching staff has recorded 228 strikeouts, which is close to the school record of 240. The team ERA of 1.22 compares to the school record of 1.13.

McKinney has bested the school single season strikeout record of 134 with 153 and she has topped the career

strikeout record of 343 with 378. She owns a 23-1 pitching record with an 0.52 ERA and has thrown a school-record 12 shutout