

## Softball Staff Honored With Region Award

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The UW-Eau Claire softball coaching staff has been named the Great Lakes Region Coaching Staff of the Year, the National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA) has announced.

Blugold head coach Leslie Huntington and assistants Robin Baker, Billie Buss and Nicole Pederson were one of eight staffs honored by the NFCA as Region Coaching Staffs of the Year.

The other region winners were Emory University (Atlantic Region), Muskingum College (Central Region), Rutgers-Camden (East Region), St. Thomas (Midwest Region), Williams College (New England Region), SUNY-Plattsburg (Northeast Region) and Linfield College (West Region). The Rutgers-Camden staff was tabbed as the Speedline/NFCA Division III National Coaching Staff of the Year after leading its team to a national championship and a 47-5 season record.

Huntington, who previously was named the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Coach of the Year for the third straight year, and her assistants directed the Blugolds to a 37-6 season mark, the best winning percentage (.860) in school history. The Blugolds were ranked No. 10 in the final NFCA Division III national poll.

During the course of the season, the Blugolds won an unprecedented third straight WIAC regular season championship and became the first team to go unbeaten through a conference campaign with a 14-0 mark. The Blugolds also breezed through the WIAC post-season tournament with a 4-0 mark to earn a spot in the 59-team NCAA Division III tournament. The NCAA berth was the first for a Blugold team since 2000 and the fifth overall.

The Blugolds reached the final of the Rock Island Regional, losing two one-run games to Coe College on the final day of the double elimination tournament. Those setbacks kept the Blugolds from advancing to the eight-team national tournament in Raleigh, North Carolina.

The Blugolds set numerous records this season including best fielding percentage for a season, most home runs in a season, most strikeouts by a pitching staff in a season and most home runs in a single game. The Blugolds also boasted the co-pitcher of the year and the co-player of the year in the WIAC.

The Blugolds figure to be a formidable foe again next season as no seniors were in the starting lineup at the end of the season.

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