

Volleyball Set To Host Labor Day Tourney

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EAU CLAIRE - The UW-Eau Claire volleyball team will begin the fall season of Blugold athletics as it will host eight teams in the UW-Eau Claire Labor Day Tournament Friday and Saturday in the McPhee Physical Education Center.

The eight other teams besides the Blugolds that will be involved in the tournament will be Alverno College, Buena Vista University, Cardinal Stritch University, Central College, Crown College, Hamline University, the College of St. Catherine, and conference rival UW-Stout.

Each team will play four matches throughout two days. Last year in the six-team Labor Day Tournament, the Blugolds were the only undefeated team and had three members named to the All-Tournament team.

The Blugolds, who are ranked sixth nationally in the American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) preseason poll and are tabbed to finish third in the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (WIAC), return seven of their top nine players from last year.

The Blugolds will be led by setter **Carly Freiborg** (*Sr.-Sacred Heart, MN/Renville County West*), who was an honorable mention All-WIAC selection last season and led the conference with 12.46 assists per game. The Blugolds will also be led by middle hitter **Jessica Groh** (*Sr.-Eau Claire/North*) and libero **Shanna Berger** (*Sr.-Baldwin/Baldwin-Woodville*). Groh led the WIAC with 1.43 blocks per game in 2005 and Berger was named to the WIAC All-Defensive team for the second consecutive year.

Central College will give the Blugolds some stiff competition. Central, who is ranked 17th in the preseason poll, won three straight NCAA Division III titles from 1998-2000. Last season, the Dutch finished with a 26-10 record and earned their 10th NCAA Tournament appearance. The Dutch lost just two letterwinners from last year's team.

Buena Vista is coming off its best season since the 1986 season with a 17-15 record. St. Kate's and Hamline both have a strong core of returning players from last year. Crown College lost in the semifinals of the Division II National Christian College Athletic Association (NCCAA) tournament last season.

I-94 rival UW-Stout also has an experienced and talented team returning and should be a tough team to face. The Blue Devils went 3-1 in last year's Labor Day Tournament.

The action gets underway at 3:30 p.m. on Friday in the McPhee Physical Education Center. There will be three rounds of matches with the second batch beginning at 5:30 p.m. and third round beginning at 7:30 p.m. The action will then continue at 10:00 a.m. Saturday morning.

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