

Defending National Champion Highlights 2004 Football Schedule

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EAU CLAIRE - St. John's (MN) University, the defending NCAA Division III national champion, highlights the 2004 UW-Eau Claire football schedule.

Three schools, St. John's, UW-La Crosse and UW-Stevens Point appear in at least one pre-season Division III football poll while UW-Whitewater received votes in the D3football.com poll. St. John's received the number one ranking in Don Hansen's Football Gazette poll while UW-La Crosse was ranked number one in the Sports Illustrated Division III poll. Both the Johnnies and Eagles were voted among the top four teams in Division III on three separate polls.

The 4th Annual Clear Water Bowl kicks off the season September 4 as the Blugolds welcome St. John's to Carson Park. The Johnnies went a perfect 14-0 in 2003 and return pre-season All-America linebacker Jamie Steffensmeier and cornerback Mike Zauhar back from a defense that held national power Mount Union (OH) to six points in the Amos Alonzo Stagg Bowl-44 points under their season average entering the national title game. The Blugolds are 3-3 lifetime against the Johnnies winning two of the last three meetings. The game will mark St. John's third appearance in the Clear Water Bowl, the first since a thrilling 28-21 overtime victory by the Blugolds in 2002.

The following week the Blugolds hit the road to face Illinois Wesleyan at Wilder Field in the first ever meeting between both schools. The Titans finished 5-5 in 2003 and were picked to finish fifth in the College Conference of Illinois and Wisconsin (CCIW) pre-season poll. Since 1991 the Titans have compiled a 49-11 (an .817 winning percentage) record at Wilder Field.

After a bye week the Blugolds return home for a three-game home stand starting September 25 with UW-Whitewater in the Hall of Fame Game. The Blugolds have won five of the last six meetings between both schools with all five victories coming consecutively before last season's 45-7 setback at Whitewater.

Homecoming 2004 will see the Blugolds square off with rival UW-River Falls on October 2. It will be the third time in the last five years that the Blugolds have squared off against the Falcons. In 2000 the Falcons won a wild 65-44 contest that saw both teams combine for nearly 1,300 yards of offense. The Blugolds would get revenge in 2002 defeating the Falcons 34-12.

The three-game home stand ends October 9 when UW-Stevens Point comes to Carson Park on Parent's Day. The Pointers are ranked ninth on the D3football.com pre-season poll and will be looking to replace All-American quarterback Scott Krause. Under Krause the Pointers led the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (WIAC) in points per game (39.4) and total yards per game (460.7).

Following Stevens Point the Blugolds embark on a four-game road trip beginning October 16 at two-time defending champion UW-La Crosse. The Eagles advanced to the second round of the NCAA Division III play-offs before falling to Mount Union 39-14. Pre-season All-America wide receiver Scott Burnoski and offensive lineman Andrew McGlenn return for the Eagles, who ranked second in the WIAC in scoring offense (33.0) and total yards per game (440.2).

Gustavus Adolphus will host the Blugolds in St. Peter, Minnesota on October 23. The two schools have only faced each other two other times with the Blugolds winning 41-0 in 1920 while the Gusties won a 42-6 decision in 1970.

The road trip continues October 30 with a trip to Ralph E. Davis Stadium to face UW-Platteville. The Blugolds have won the last eight meetings between both schools, winning the past two games by identical 42-35 scores.

The Blugolds play their final road game of 2004 on November 6 when they face UW-Stout and new head coach Todd Strop. The Blugolds have lost two straight decisions to the Blue Devils and are looking to win their first game in Menomonie since 1996.

The 2004 regular season finale welcomes the Blugolds back to Carson Park where t