

Blugolds Unbeaten In Labor Day Classic

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The UW-Eau Claire volleyball team went through its own nine-team Labor Day volleyball classic as the only unbeaten team by whitewashing Alverno College and then downing Central College of Iowa in the McPhee Phy Ed Center here Saturday after topping College of St. Catherine and Hamline Friday.

In their first-ever meeting against Alverno, an all women's school from Milwaukee, the Blugolds breezed to a 3-0 triumph on scores of 30-4, 30-20 and 30-10. Then, in a showdown with 17th-ranked Central, the sixth-ranked Blugolds fought their way to a 3-1 triumph, losing a close second game 30-28 but winning the other three by scores of 30-23, 30-21 and 30-21.

The Blugolds had not faced Central in 10 years but now own a 4-0 all-time record against the Pella, Iowa school which won NCAA Division III national championships in 1998, 1999 and 2000.

The Labor Day classic had all nine teams playing four matches. Central, UW-Stout and Buena Vista all finished with 3-1 records while Cardinal Stritch and Hamline were 2-2, College of St. Catherine 1-3 and Alverno and Crown 0-4. Stout's only loss was to Central and BV's only setback was to Stout.

Against Alverno, veteran Blugold coach Lisa Herb was able to rest most of her starters after the first game. The Blugolds hit .588 for the match with 54 kills, seven blocks and 13 service aces. Freshman **Cary Rasmussen** (*Sparta*) and junior **Lissa Martinez** (*Vadnais Heights, MN/White Bear Lake*) led the team with seven kills apiece. Sophomore **Emily Haese** (*Mishicot*) had 36 assists while senior **Jess Groh** (*Eau Claire/North*) had four blocks and senior **Shanna Berger** (*Baldwin/Baldwin-Wallace*) topped the ?Golds in digs with 14.

Senior **Jodi Dunbar** (*Platteville*) paced the Central win with 22 kills while Groh added 18 along with five blocks. Senior **Carly Freiborg** (*Sacred Heart, MN/Renville West*) had 54 assists while Berger contributed five service aces and 25 digs. **Nikki Peterson** (*6-2 junior, North St. Paul, MN/North*) had a team-high six blocks.

Groh and Berger were the two Blugolds selected for the 11-player All-Tournament team. Joining them were Central's Tessa Prati and Terri Berger, Buena Vista's Ashley Wilde and Kristen Staiert, Stout's Linda Meyer and Kendra Pagel, St. Catherine's Erika Kriechbaum, Hamline's Dana Luiken and Crown's Jennifer Sunwall.

The Blugolds' start almost parallels their 2005 start when they finished 30-5 overall. Last year, the Blugolds did not lose a game until their 12th game of the season in their fourth match. This year, it was their 11th game in which they suffered their first loss, also in their fourth match. The Blugolds won their first eight matches to start the 2005 campaign. The Blugolds will carry a four-match win streak into their next competition as they participate in the Augsburg Tournament Sept. 8-9 in Minneapolis.

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