

Women's Soccer To Face Wheaton In NCAA Sectional

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The UW-Eau Claire women's soccer team will join Wheaton College of Illinois, Hardin-Simmons of Texas and the University of California-Santa Cruz in a four-team sectional tournament at Wheaton, Illinois Friday and Saturday.

The Blugolds will open against the host school while Hardin-Simmons and UC-Santa Cruz will square off in the other semifinal game Friday. Game times have yet to be determined.

The Blugolds will take a 23-2 season record and a No. 16 national ranking into the contest against Wheaton which is 20-2 and ranked No. 10. Both Hardin-Simmons and Santa Cruz are unbeaten. Santa Cruz is the No. 4-ranked team in the most recent NSCAA/adidas national rankings with a 17-0-3 mark while Hardin-Simmons is No. 12 with an 18-0-4 record. Hardin-Simmons beat top-ranked Trinity University of Texas to reach the sectional final after topping Puget Sound in a shootout in its first round game. Santa Cruz beat Claremont-Mudd-Scripps and Webster to advance. Wheaton downed Aurora and Macalester to reach its spot opposite the Blugolds who blanked Concordia-Moorhead and Augustana in their first two NCAA games.

Wheaton is the team that eliminated the Blugolds in the second round of last year's tournament by a 2-1 margin in overtime. The Thunder won the NCAA Division III title in 2004.

The Blugolds are moving into uncharted territory. They have won more games (23) and posted more shutouts (18) than any team in Blugold or WIAC history. The best previous WIAC numbers were 22 and 16 by UW-Stevens Point and the previous Blugold records in those categories were 17 and 14.

The Blugolds are riding an eight-game win streak during which time they have not allowed a goal. The last team to score against the Blugolds was Macalester which notched a 1-0 triumph over the 'Golds on Oct. 18. The Blugolds' only other loss was also by a 1-0 margin against St. Olaf on Oct. 1. That setback snapped a 10-game win streak to start the season.

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