

Men's Basketball Begins Season With Win Over Alma

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NORTH MANCHESTER, IN - The UW-Eau Claire men's basketball team defeated Alma College (MI) 69-61 tonight in the season opener at the Manchester Tip-off.

The Blugolds are now 6-1 in season openers since the 2000-01 season.

The Scots started out the game scoring the first six points. With the score 8-2 the Blugolds went on a 6-0 run, which was capped off by a **Luke Meier** (*Jr.-Cross Plains, WI/Middleton*) three-pointer to give the Blugolds their first lead of the game with under 14 minutes to play in the first half. The Blugolds would not trail the rest of the way.

Eau Claire's biggest lead of the first half happened with 52 second left after Luke Meier hit two free throws to give the Blugolds a 36-29 lead. Alma then hit a jumper before the half as the score at halftime was 36-31 Blugolds.

The Scots shot better than the Blugolds from the field in the first half, shooting 53.8%, while the Blugolds shot 45.8%. However, the Blugolds were 4-of-6 from beyond the arc and Alma was 0-for-5. The Blugolds were also more aggressive in the half, going to the free throw line 11 more times than the Scots and hitting seven more charity shots.

The Blugolds came out firing in the second half out-scoring the Scots 11-4 the first four minutes to take a 50-35 lead. About midway through the second half, Alma went on a 10-0 run to cut a 14-point Blugolds lead to four. The Scots eventually got the margin down to two with 5:51 to play.

The Blugolds then had back-to-back layups by **Jared Bardon** (*Jr.-DeForest, WI*) and **Zack Ryan** (*Jr.-Lake Elmo, MN/Tartan*) to extend the lead back to six with 1:50 to play. The Blugolds then went 5-for-8 from the free throw line in the final minute to hang on to win 69-61.

Eau Claire shot 40.7% from the field and 42.9% from three in the contest. Alma shot 43.1% from the field and only 16.7% from beyond the arc. The Blugolds out-rebounded Alma 42-30 and had nine more offensive boards. Eau Claire also forced 14 turnovers, while committing nine.

Dan Beyer (*Jr.-Waukesha, WI/Catholic Memorial*) led the Blugolds with 15 points. He also had seven rebounds. **Matt Riley** (*Sr.-Cadott, WI*) finished with a double-double with 14 points and 10 rebounds. Jared Bardon had 11 points and Luke Meier added 10 points. Alma's Isaac Smith led all scorers with 20 points.

The Blugolds now face the winner of the Manchester College (IN) and Eureka College (IL) contest in the championship game. The championship game will take place at 6 p.m. local time tomorrow night.

Eau Claire-Alma Box Score

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