

Men's Basketball Lets One Slip Away To Suffer First Loss

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NORTH MANCHESTER, IN - The UW-Eau Claire men's basketball team let a 13-point halftime lead slip away tonight as it lost to Manchester College (IN) 68-59 in the championship game of the Manchester Tip-off Tournament.

The loss drops the Blugolds to a record of 1-1 this season. The Spartans improve to 2-0 with the win.

The Blugolds came out to play early as they out-scored the Spartans 19-9 in the first seven minutes of the game. Eau Claire extended its lead to 11 after a **Matt Riley** (*Sr.-Cadott, WI*) three-pointer with 12:21 to play in the first half.

With the score 26-16, the Blugolds went on a 9-0 run for their biggest lead of the game of 35-16 with 4:26 remaining in the half. Manchester cut the lead down to 13 at the half as both teams went into the locker room with the score 38-25 Eau Claire.

The Blugolds shot the ball well from the field in the half, connecting on 56.5% of their shots, including 6-of-8 from behind the three-point line. The Blugolds were also 85.7% from the free throw line and out-rebounded the Spartans 19-10 in the first half.

The second half was a totally different story. The Spartans out-scored the Blugolds 18-7 the first ten minutes of the half to cut the Eau Claire lead down to two. Manchester then took a 48-47 lead on a Wes Gardner layup with 8:42 to play in the game. It was their first lead since the 17:47 mark in the first half.

Manchester climbed its lead up to six as part of a 10-0 run with a little over seven minutes left to play. The lead got as high as seven at 58-51 with 5:51 remaining. The Blugolds then nipped away at the lead and cut it to two with 3:13 to go.

The Blugolds then had an opportunity down three with under a minute play, but the Blugolds turned the ball over and then Manchester hit four straight free throws to seal the victory as they rallied to win 68-59.

Manchester shot 53.6% from the field in the second half, while the Blugolds shot just 36.8%. Eau Claire was 0-for-5 from beyond the arc in the second half. The Blugolds out-rebounded Manchester 31-23 in the game, but committed 19 turnovers, including three in the final minute.

Matt Riley led all scorers with 19 points. Riley just missed one field goal all game as was 5-for-6 from the field, 3-for-3 from three, and 6-for-6 from the free throw line. **Jared Bardon** (*Jr.-DeForest, WI*) was the only other Blugold to score in double-figures with 16 points. **Dan Beyer** (*Jr.-Waukesha, WI/Catholic Memorial*) led Eau Claire with eight rebounds. Wes Gardner led Manchester in scoring with 17 points.

Matt Riley and Jared Bardon were both named to the All-Tournament team. Gardner was named the Tournament's Most Valuable Player.

Next the Blugolds will travel to face St. Mary's University (MN) next Saturday night. The tip is scheduled for 7:30 p.m.

Eau Claire-Manchester Box Score

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