

Men's Basketball thrills Home Crowd In One-Point Victory

Posted: Wednesday, December 6, 2006

EAU CLAIRE - With two seconds left in regulation, **Zack Ryan** (*Jr. -Lake Elmo, MN/Tartan*) made a game-winning layup and pushed the UW-Eau Claire men's basketball team to a 63-62 win against UW-River Falls in Eau Claire's first home game this season.

The team's first home game was also its first Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (WIAC) victory as it is now 1-2 in conference play and 3-3 overall. River Falls drops to 1-2 in WIAC competition and 2-4 in all games.

This is the third Blugolds-Falcons game in a row and the fourth out of the past five that has been decided by two points or less. Eau Claire holds the all-time advantage 102-77.

In a game with seven ties and nine lead changes, it started out with both teams battling it out to a tied 8-8 game after five minutes had gone by. The Falcons went on a 16-to-5 run and held a 24-13 lead at 7:07. The Blugolds began to cut into the largest Falcon lead of the night and by halftime Eau Claire made it a three-point 28-25 game. Eau Claire never led in the half.

Eau Claire shot 37.9% in the first half while going 2-of-9 for threes. River Falls put up 12 three pointers and hit three while shooting 37.5% from the floor. Points off turnovers went 15-to-7 in favor of the Falcons while Eau Claire had eight second chance points to the Falcon two.

The teams reversed roles in the second half with Eau Claire going on top 32-31 at 16:54 after a Ryan jumper. The Blugolds went on a 12-to-5 spurt to push the lead to 44-36 at 10:37. The eight point lead was Eau Claire's largest in the game. The Falcons kept whittling down the lead until the game was tied at 52-52 with 4:05 to play.

In the last four minutes there eight lead changes and five ties. The teams mostly exchanged free throw shots as they swapped the one-point lead until a **Dan Ottney** (*Jr.-Glenwood City*) three pointer put Eau Claire up 61-57 at 1:39. River Falls pulled to within two at 1:27 after a layup. The ball then remained in Blugold hands due to a pair of offensive rebounds by Ottney and **Dan Beyer** (*Jr.-Waukesha/Catholic Memorial*) until a Ryan turnover with 17 seconds to go. River Falls' Jontae Koonkaew proceeded to go in for a layup with seven seconds left, but was fouled by **Geoff Probst** (*Fr.-Moose Lake, MN/U. of North Dakota*). The basket fell and Koonkaew converted the three-point chance to bring River Falls up by a point. With two ticks left on the clock Ryan put Eau Claire on top with his eventual game-winner, but River Falls did try a last-chance desperation shot that clanked off the front of the rim.

The Blugolds shot 53.8% in the second half while going 45.5% in the game. They also went 36.8% with seven makes from long range and 54.5% from the line. Eau Claire had 11 second chance points to the Falcon four while outrebounding River Falls 43-to-25.

Beyer and **Jared Bardon** (*Jr.-DeForest*) led the Blugolds with 16 points each. Ryan also was in double-digits with 12. **Steve Hoelzel** (*Jr.-Kaukauna/UW-Milwaukee*) had nine boards while Probst had seven.

The Falcons shot 50.0% in the second half and 42.9% for the contest. They went 27.3% from behind the arc and 61.5% from behind the line. Koonkaew and Courtney Davis each had 15 points to lead River Falls.

River Falls had the advantage in turnovers 8-to-15, points off turnovers 22-to-14, points in the paint 34-to-24, and bench points 17-to-10.

Eau Claire's next game will be this Sunday at Northland College in Ashland.

Eau Claire-River Falls Box Score- PH -