

## Wartburg Hangs On For Classic Title

*Posted: Saturday, December 30, 2006*

EAU CLAIRE - On the strength of 11 three-pointers, Wartburg College built a 20-point lead, then had to thwart a hard-charging UW-Eau Claire to claim the championship of the 38th annual Eau Claire Holiday Classic at the W. L. Zorn Arena Saturday night.

The Waverly, Iowa school claimed a 75-70 triumph to end Eau Claire's string of 15 consecutive Holiday Classic wins and seven straight Classic championships. The decision also snapped Eau Claire's current five-game win streak, leaving the Blugolds with a 7-4 season record while Wartburg improved to 6-4.

The teams, who last met in the 1949-50 season, were locked in a close contest until the final 5:16 of the first half when Wartburg went on a 16-2 run to take a 45-28 lead at the intermission. The Knights continued to add to the lead in the second half, reaching 20 points at 59-39 with 12:25 to go. It was still a 20-point margin at 63-43 with 9:57 remaining when Eau Claire made its move. Behind Jared Bardon, who hit a career-high 30 points, the Blugolds outscored Wartburg, 20-5, to pull within five at 68-63 with 59.4 seconds remaining. The Blugolds were forced to foul and Wartburg made five of eight charity tosses in the final minute. Eau Claire was able to get as close as three (73-70) with six seconds but Lee Nelson's two free throws iced the game seconds later.

Bardon's 30 was fashioned from 13 of 19 shooting including four of seven treys. He also had a team-high eight rebounds.

Wartburg was led by tournament MVP James Menke who came off the bench to score 22 as he hit seven of eight from the field including five of six three-pointers. He also received the tournament's Fireman Award for the best performance by a non-starter. Teammate Mike Jackson earned the Hustle Award while Knights' Nelson and Nick Gullickson joined Eau Claire's Bardon and Dan Beyer and Marian's Titus Redmond on the All-Tournament team.

Eau Claire has little time to recover as the Blugolds resume Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference competition when they host UW-Whitewater at 7 p.m. Tuesday in Zorn.

Eau Claire-Wartburg Box Score

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