

Blugold Women Lose Battle For Second

Posted: Saturday, February 17, 2007

WHITEWATER - The UW-Eau Claire women's basketball team fell short in its battle for a final second-place finish in the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, dropping a 61-49 decision to UW-Whitewater in its regular season finale here Saturday.

The Blugolds, who beat the Warhawks 62-51 in their first meeting at Eau Claire, had an opportunity to secure the No. 2 seed for the WIAC tournament with a win. As a result of the setback, the Blugolds will be the No. 3 seed and host UW-La Crosse at 7 p.m. Monday at Zorn Arena.

With the win, Whitewater finished second in the conference behind champion UW-Stout and will host UW-Oshkosh Monday in a quarterfinal game. If both Eau Claire and Whitewater win their games Monday, it would set up a rematch at Whitewater in the semifinals next Wednesday.

Both Eau Claire and Whitewater entered Saturday's contest with five-game winning streaks. The last loss for each team was administered by Stout. Whitewater has gone 9-2 since its loss at Eau Claire Jan. 3 and was receiving votes in the most recent D3hoops.com poll. The Blugolds had won eight of their last nine games.

The home team in the EC-WW series has now won the last seven meetings. The last time the visiting team won was a 77-58 Blugold win at Whitewater on Jan. 31, 2004.

Eau Claire took control of Saturday's game early and was up by an 18-14 margin with 4:53 left in the first half. But Whitewater outscored the Blugolds, 15-2, to take a 29-20 lead at intermission. The Warhawks hit six straight free throws and four of six field goal attempts including a 3-pointer while Eau Claire missed its final four shots of the half and turned the ball over five times in that span.

In the second half, the Blugolds were able to close the gap on several occasions, trailing 42-40 and 44-42. But Whitewater responded with several mini-runs, outscoring Eau Claire, 8-0, to go up 52-42. Then after the Blugolds pulled with five at 52-47 with 4:19 remaining, Whitewater outscored Eau Claire, 9-2, to end the game.

While Whitewater's starters managed just 17 points, the Warhawks got 44 points from their bench, led by Lindsey Buecher with 18 and Tiffany Morton with 13.

The Warhawks had a statistical advantage over the Blugolds in most categories but the most significant was at the free throw line. Whitewater converted 19 of 27 charity tosses while the Blugolds made 9 of 14. The Blugolds could not find the range from beyond the arc, hitting just 2 of 13 while Whitewater connected on 4 of 11.

Neither team was sharp from the field, the Blugolds hitting just 33 percent and Whitewater 37 percent. The Warhawks maintained a 42-36 edge on the boards.

The only Blugold to reach double digits in scoring was sophomore **Brittanni Hakanson** (*Wheeler/Boyceville*) who tallied 12 points on 6 of 11 shooting. Junior **Michelle Burns** (*Eau Claire/North*) nearly had a double-double with nine points and a game-high 10 rebounds.

The Blugolds, who were 13-13 overall and 8-8 in the WIAC last season, are 17-8 overall and 11-5 in the WIAC heading into next week's playoffs. Whitewater is 19-6 on the season and ended 12-4 in the WIAC.

Eau Claire-Whitewater Box Score

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