

Women's Basketball Falls To Stout In WIAC Championship

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MENOMONIE - The UW-Eau Claire women's basketball team was unable to get anything to fall today as UW-Stout led the entire contest on its way to capturing the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (WIAC) Tournament title for the third straight time with a 73-61 victory at Johnson Fieldhouse.

With the win, the Blue Devils (23-5) receive the automatic bid to the NCAA Division III Women's Basketball Tournament next week. Stout has now won four WIAC Tournament championships, which is the most of any other conference team. The No. 1 seed in the conference tournament remains unbeaten in tournament play, a perfect 27-0. The Blugolds still have a slight chance of receiving one of the 20 eligible at-large births for the tournament. The Blugolds have an overall record of 19-9.

The Blue Devils scored the first five points of the game and kept the lead the rest of the way. A steal and layup by **Heather Witt** (So.-Kendal, WI/Royall) cut the Blue Devils' lead to 9-8 with 15 minutes left to go in the half. Stout then went on a 12-2 run over the next five minutes to lengthen its lead to 21-10. The Blugolds were 1-for-8 on field goal attempts during that stretch.

After three free throws by **Michelle Burns** (Jr.-Eau Claire, WI/North) cut the lead back down to eight, the Blue Devils went on an 8-0 run to take a 29-13 advantage with just over five minutes to play in the half. Stout had its biggest lead of the half after a Kelsey Duoss free throw gave the Blue Devils a 34-15 lead with 4:08 on the clock. Michelle Burns hit a jump shot in the final seconds of the first half, but the Blue Devils still went into halftime with a 42-27 lead.

The Blue Devils shot 61% in the first half, while the Blugolds shot 32%. Stout also out-rebounded Eau Claire 19-12.

The Blue Devils kept their lead in double-digits for most of the second half. **Brittanni Hakanson** (So.-Wheeler, WI/Boyceville) scored the first points of the second half, but Stout's Kelsey Duoss followed that with a three-point play to give the Blue Devils a 16-point lead. Stout extended its lead to as much as 20 points, 57-37 with 11:21 left in the game.

The Blugolds then made a little run, out-scoring Stout 9-2 to make the score 59-46 with 6:51 on the clock. With 2:30 left, Heather Witt and **Heidi Arciszewski** (So.-Thorp, WI) made back-to-back three pointers to cut the Stout lead to 68-59. Eau Claire then had a chance to cut the lead to seven, but missed a jump shot and was forced to foul. The Blue Devils hit the two free throws and went on to win by a final score of 73-61. The Blugolds have now lost six straight at Stout with their last win coming on December 7, 2002 by a score of 72-69.

Stout shot 52% for the game, while the Blugolds shot just 33%. Eau Claire has not shot well at Johnson Fieldhouse as their highest shooting percentage in their last five visits has been 35%, which was earlier this season. The Blue Devils ended up out-rebounding the Blugolds 38-34.

Michelle Burns led Eau Claire with 15 points. Heather Witt was the only other Blugold to score in double-figures with 10 points. **Ashley Anderson** (So.-Oakdale, MN/North St. Paul) had a team-high 10 rebounds for Eau Claire. Stout's Kelsey Duoss had a double-double with a game-high 19 points and 13 rebounds. She also had four of the team's nine blocked shots.

The announcement of the 63-team NCAA Division III Tournament field and the first and second round sites will be made on Monday.

Eau Claire-Stout Box Score

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