

Softball Starts 0-2 At NFCA Leadoff Classic

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PANAMA CITY BEACH, FL - The UW-Eau Claire softball team opened the 2007 season falling to Willamette (OR) 8-4 and Central (IA) 5-3 at the National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA) Division III Leadoff Classic hosted here today at the Frank Brown Complex.

Willamette improves to 4-3 on the season while Central earned their fourth win against two losses. Central received votes in the latest NFCA Division III National Poll. The Blugolds entered their first two games today ranked seventh nationally.

Against the Bearcats of Willamette Eau Claire jumped out to a 1-0 lead in the top of the first inning when **Jill Janke** (*Jr.-Black River Falls*) singled to drive in **Casey Leisgang** (*Jr.-Seymour*) from third base. Leisgang and **Mallory McKinney** (*Sr.-Brooklyn Park, MN/Champlin Park*) had advanced into scoring position off a double steal before Janke drove in the first run of the game.

The Blugolds extended the lead to 2-0 in the second inning when Leisgang ripped a double into centerfield scoring **Stephanie Salter** (*Sr.-Schofield/D.C. Everest*) from second base.

The Bearcats would respond scoring two runs in the bottom of the second and third innings. Starter **Bri Sturm** (*So.-Zumbrota, MN/Zumbrota-Mazepa*) would leave the game after retiring one batter in the third and was replaced by McKinney. Willamette added three more runs in the fourth inning and drove in another run in the sixth inning en route to scoring eight unanswered runs.

Trailing 8-2 entering the top of the seventh the Blugolds Leisgang led off the inning with her second double of the game. **Rachel Paulus** (*Sr.-Wisconsin Rapids/Lincoln*) followed with a triple to drive in Leisgang and cut the lead to 8-3. McKinney followed with an RBI groundout to third base scoring Paulus to make the score 8-4. The Blugolds loaded the bases with two outs but a fly out to left field ended the game to preserve the Bearcat victory.

The Blugolds outhit the Bearcats 12-9 but left 10 runners on base compared to seven for Willamette. Five of the nine Bearcat hits went for extra bases as Willamette hit three doubles and two home runs.

Game two saw Central take an early 1-0 lead in the first inning but the Blugolds battled back to take a 2-1 lead in the bottom of the second. With two outs and **Amber Haack** (*Sr.-Madison/La Follette*) on base after hitting single up the middle **Bekki Kidnie** (*Fr.-St. Paul, MN/Johnson*) smacked a two-run home run to give Eau Claire a 2-1 lead.

After Central scored two runs in the top of the fifth to retake a 3-2 lead Eau Claire answered in the bottom of the sixth at when Leisgang scored from third on a McKinney ground out to the pitcher to even the score at 3-3.

Central regained the lead scoring two runs in the top of the seventh for a 5-3 as Eau Claire needed a rally in their final at-bat. Kidnie reached base on a walk advancing to second on a ground out but was left on base when the Dutch recorded the final Blugold out to secure the win.

Central outhit the Blugolds 10-5 and stranded seven batters on base compared to three for Eau Claire. Each team recorded just one extra-base hit. McKinney struck out nine Dutch batters while walking four.

The Blugolds will finish out pool play tomorrow when they face William Paterson University of New Jersey tomorrow at 10:00 A.M. The Blugolds will begin bracket play at the Leadoff Classic later that afternoon at the completion of pool play.

Eau Claire-Willamette Box Score

Central-Eau Claire Box Score