

Blugolds Win Final Two In Sun West Tournament

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ORANGE, CA - The UW-Eau Claire softball team rocked Augsburg College and Cal State-East Bay for 28 hits including 11 of the extra base variety in winning its final two games in the Sun West Tournament here Friday.

The Blugolds kept Augsburg winless for the week with a 15-4 triumph, then rode the two-hit pitching of sophomore **Bri Sturm** (*Zumbrota, MN/Zumbrota-Mazeppa*) to an 8-0 win over CS-East Bay in a game that was shortened to five innings.

The twin triumphs gave the Blugolds a 9-1 record for the week and pushed their season record to 12-4. Only St. Thomas, the No. 1-ranked team in the current NFCA Division III poll, had a better record for the week at 11-1. The Blugolds, who have now won 12 of 13 since losing their first three games of the season, split with St. Thomas during the week, beating the Tommies, 2-1, then losing a 3-2 decision in eight innings.

The Blugolds started slow against Augsburg, trailing 2-0 after three innings. But they picked up the pace over the final four innings to finish with 17 hits, a season high and the most since they laced 21 hits against UW-Platteville on April 9 last season.

The Blugolds tied the score on a two-run homer by junior **Jill Janke** (*Black River Falls*), her fourth of the season, in the fourth inning. A two-run double by senior **Amber Haack** (*Madison/LaFollette*) keyed a four-run fifth that put the Blugolds ahead for good at 6-2.

After Augsburg cut the deficit to two in the bottom of the inning, the Blugolds rebounded with five in the sixth, the big blow being a three-run homer by junior **Casey Leisgang** (*Seymour*). That round-tripper was her second of the season and 21st of her career to tie Jill Schoenike's career record set between 1996 and 1999. It was the third hit of the game for Leisgang.

Janke pushed her game RBI total to four with a two-run single in the seventh. Janke, Haack and sophomore **Betsy Kettinger** (*Bloomington, MN/Jefferson*) each collected two safeties in the game.

Sophomore **Kristi Doucette** (*Green Bay/Ashwaubenon*) went four and a third innings on the mound to pick up the victory. She was spelled by freshman **Jessica Flood** (*Madison/LaFollette*) in the fifth with senior **Mallory McKinney** (*Brooklyn Park, MN/Champlin Park*) closing out the final two frames.

Sturm fired her first collegiate complete game shutout in the matchup against East Bay. She gave up both hits in the third, one of the infield variety. She walked just one and set down three on strikes.

While the Blugolds achieved double digits in hits for the eighth time this season with 11, they bunched seven of them together to produce five runs in the third inning.

Seven different players drove in a run during the game. Freshman **Bekki Kidnie** (*St. Paul, MN/Johnson*) led the hitting with three including a solo home run to lead off the bottom of the fifth and end the game on the eight-run rule. Janke and junior Michelle Butkus (Medord) each had a pair of hits with both of Butkus' being doubles.

The Blugolds, who are ranked No. 9 in the most recent NFCA Division III poll, will make their home debut March 31 with a 1 p.m. twin bill against St. Norbert College at Gelein Field in Carson Park.

BLUGOLD NOTES: Kidnie and Janke share the team lead in home runs with four. The Blugolds have hit 14 as a team in their first 16 games which would be on a pace to break the school single season record they set with 34 home runs in 43 games last year. Seven different players have contributed roundtrippers this season.

Leisgang is early in her junior year but has tied Jill Schoenike's school record for home runs with 21. Not far behind is McKinney who has 17 but has not rapped one yet this year. With four already this year, Janke's career total is now up to 14. Haack is just one back at 13 for her career.

The Blugolds' only loss in the last 13 games was a 3-2, extra-inning setback against St. Thoma