

Softball To Host St. Mary's On thursday

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EAU CLAIRE - The No.4-ranked UW-Eau Claire softball team will host St. Mary's University (MN) for a doubleheader on Thursday at Gelein Field.

The Blugolds are currently riding a six-game winning streak and have an overall record of 14-4. St. Mary's has an overall record of 8-6 and are on a four-game winning streak. Eau Claire has struggled with St. Mary's in the past as it has a 7-13 all-time record against the Cardinals. The last time the Blugolds hosted St. Mary's back in 2005 the Cardinals swept them by scores of 10-2 and 4-2.

Eau Claire has been really hitting the ball well this season. As a team the Blugolds have 17 home runs in 18 games thus far and are on pace to break the record they set last season. **Jill Janke** (*Jr.-Black River Falls, WI*) and **Bekki Kidnie** (*Fr.-St. Paul, MN/Johnson*) have combined for eight of the team's 17 home runs. **Casey Leisgang** (*Jr.-Seymour, WI*) just broke the career record for home runs, hitting her 22nd and her third of the season against St. Norbert. The Blugolds have a batting average of .373 and are holding opponents to just a .255 average. The Blugolds are also batting .368 with runners in scoring position and have 34 two-out RBIs. They are outscoring their opponents 135-57.

The Blugolds pitching staff has a combined ERA of 2.21. **Mallory McKinney** (*Sr.-Brooklyn Park, MN/Champlin Park*) is 7-2 this season with a 1.31 ERA. She has struck out 53 batters in 59 innings pitched. **Bri Sturm** (*So.-Zumbrota, MN/Zumbrota-Mazeppa*) has started 10 games this season and has a record of 5-2.

St. Mary's opened the season with four straight losses at the National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA) Leadoff Classic in Panama City Beach, FL. The Cardinals then went on to win four games in a row before getting swept by the University of St. Thomas. Since then St. Mary's has swept its last two doubleheaders.

The Cardinals are predicted to finish third in the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) under first year head coach Jen Miller. Miller was the catcher on St. Mary's 2000 National Championship team.

The Cardinals have gotten off to quick starts in games this season as they are out-scoring their opponents 18-8 in the first two innings. Nikki Jung leads the team at the plate with a .405 batting average and has a team-high 20 RBIs. She has also hit two of the team's five home runs. Melissa Mondo leads the team with 19 hits and Cassie Otte has a team-high 14 runs scored. The Cardinals are hitting .312 as a team. On the mound, Megan Wallisch has started all but one game. Wallisch is 8-4 with a 3.58 ERA. She has struck out 42 batters this season.

The first game of the doubleheader between the Blugolds and the Cardinals will begin at 4 p.m. at Gelein Field in Carson Park.

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