

Softball Wins Two On First Day Of WIAC Tourney

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EAU CLAIRE - The UW-Eau Claire softball team defeated UW-Whitewater 9-2 in the first round of the 2007 Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (WIAC) Softball Tournament and then defeated top-seeded UW-Oshkosh 4-3 in nine innings to advance in the winners' bracket.

In the Blugolds first game of the day Eau Claire would hold UW-Whitewater to just three hits, while the Warhawks did not help themselves committing six errors. The Blugolds got the scoring started when **Mallory McKinney** (Sr.-Brooklyn Park, MN/Champlin Park) scored on a Whitewater error in the bottom of the first.

Casey Leisgang (Jr.-Seymour, WI) then hit a RBI double with two outs in the bottom of the second that plated **Shannon Barone** (Sr.-De Pere, WI) to make the score 2-0. Eau Claire extended its lead in the bottom of the third to 5-0. **Michelle Butkus** (Jr.-Medford, WI) hit a single that scored **Katie Stalker** (Fr.-Madison, WI/La Follette). Two batters later **Mandy Tschernach** (Sr.-Rice Lake, WI) singled to center to drive in Butkus. The final run of the inning came on a **Stephanie Salter** (Sr.-Schofield, WI/D.C. Everest) squeeze bunt that scored Tschernach.

Whitewater got its first hit of the game in the top of the fourth and then got two runs in the top of the fifth to make the score 5-2. The Blugolds broke the game open in the bottom of the sixth scoring four runs. **Jill Janke** (Jr.-Black River Falls, WI) hit her fifth home run of the season to right field for the first run of the inning. Salter then hit a single that scored Barone. Later in the inning, **Bekki Kidnie** (Fr.-St. Paul, MN/Johnson) scored on a Warhawk error and Paulus hit a double that scored Salter as Eau Claire wound up winning 9-2.

McKinney (12-7) struck out five in 6.1 innings and allowed just two hits for the win. **Rachel Paulus** (Sr.-Wisconsin Rapids, WI/Lincoln), Tschernach, Barone, and Salter all had multi-hit games for Eau Claire.

The next game matched the Blugolds against 11th-ranked and top-seeded UW-Oshkosh. The pitching matchup featured the top two career strikeout leaders in WIAC history in Ronessa Stampfli of Oshkosh and Mallory McKinney of Eau Claire.

The Titans got on the scoreboard first with a Jennelle Schmidt single that scored two in the top of the first. The Blugolds responded in the bottom of the inning with a two-run home run by Michelle Butkus that just snuck inside the left field foul pole to tie it at 2-2.

Eau Claire took the lead in the bottom of the third when Jill Janke laid down a timely bunt that scored Rachel Paulus to make the score 3-2. Oshkosh evened up the game in the top of the fourth when Whitney Tyriver hit a single to center with two outs to drive in Schmidt.

The Titans would get runners at first and second with nobody out in the top of the seventh. The Blugolds would get out of the jam after the Titans popped up a bunt attempt that was caught by Michelle Butkus, who then got the runner at first for a double play. The Blugolds did not threaten in the bottom of the seventh and the game went into extra innings.

In the top of the ninth Oshkosh would get a runner to third with two outs. However, Eau Claire's Mallory McKinney induced a groundball right back to her to end the inning. With one out in the bottom of the ninth Shannon Barone hit a double to right field. Then Bekki Kidnie stepped to the plate and hit a base hit right up the middle that scored Barone from second to end the game 4-3. Eau Claire has now won three straight conference tournament games over Oshkosh and has won six straight overall in the WIAC Tournament.

McKinney (13-7) pitched all nine innings, struck out six and allowed six hits to get the win. Michelle Butkus was 3-for-4 with two RBIs