

# Eau Claire NCAA Regional Softball Preview

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EAU CLAIRE - UW-Eau Claire will be the host school this Thursday through Sunday for the seven-team NCAA Division III Softball Tournament Regional to be held at Gelein Field in Eau Claire's Carson Park.

Eau Claire is one of eight regional sites across the nation in the 59-team NCAA Tournament. This is the fourth time Eau Claire has been selected to host a regional but the first time since 2000. Gelein Field was also the site for the 1997, 1999, 2001 and 2002 NCAA Division III Championship Tournaments.

The seven teams in this year's field include top-seeded UW-Oshkosh, Illinois Wesleyan University, Augustana College (IL), University of Chicago, Coe College (IA), UW-Eau Claire, and St. Norbert College. The format will be double-elimination. The champion of the regional advances to the Division III Championships in Salem, VA, May 18-22.

UW-Oshkosh (34-9) comes into the Eau Claire regional as the top seed and ranked No. 11 in the National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA) poll. This will be Oshkosh's fifth appearance in the NCAA Tournament. The Titans won the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (WIAC) regular season title with a record of 15-1. In the conference tournament last weekend, Oshkosh lost both of their games in nine innings to UW-Eau Claire. The Titans are 4-3 this season against opponents in the regional.

Oshkosh is led by pitcher Ronessa Stampfli (17-6) who earned her third consecutive WIAC Pitcher of the Year award after leading the conference with 226 strikeouts. Stampfli holds the conference career record for strikeouts with 706.

Illinois Wesleyan (31-12) is the No. 2 seed in the Eau Claire Regional. The Titans will be making their seventh appearance in the NCAA Tournament and their first since the 2003 season when they finished third. The Titans won the regular season College Conference of Illinois and Wisconsin (CCIW) title with a record of 13-1, but lost to Augustana in the championship game of the CCIW Tournament. The Titans are 2-4 this year against Eau Claire Regional opponents.

Valerie Hackett led the CCIW with 10 home runs and Molly Coers led the conference with 64 hits. Lauren Hyland (17-4) led the conference with 117 strikeouts.

Augustana (30-12) is the second CCIW team in the regional as it comes in as the No. 3 seed. This is the second straight season that the Vikings will be making a postseason appearance and the third time in four years. Augustana defeated Illinois Wesleyan twice in the CCIW Tournament to capture the championship and the automatic bid. The Vikings are currently riding a 14-game winning streak. Augustana is 2-3 against opponents in the regional.

The Vikings are led by Lorena Cernetisch who had a team-high .435 batting average. She finished second in the CCIW with nine home runs, and led the conference with 48 runs scored and with 105 total bases.

University of Chicago (25-9) will be the No. 4 seed in the Eau Claire Regional. The Maroons received an at-large bid from the University Athletic Association (UAA). The Maroons are making their fifth appearance in the NCAA Tournament and their second consecutive appearance. Chicago needs just one more win to match a school win record, which was set in 2001 and matched in 2004. The Maroons did hit a school record 25 home runs this season. The Maroons were 3-1 against regional opponents.

Vanessa Pineros led the Maroons at the plate, hitting .449 with nine doubles, and two home runs. Petra Wade (15-5) has 50 career wins on the mound, the most ever in school history.

Coe College (27-12) is the No. 5 seed in the Eau Claire Regional. The Kohawks received an at-large bid out of the Iowa Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (IIAC). This is the third straight year Coe has made the NCAA Tournament. Last season Coe defeated UW-Eau Claire twice to advance to the NCAA Championships. Coe has only faced one opponent from the regional, defeating Augustana 2-0 on March 11th.

Ellie Schultz (23-8) lea