

## Softball Team Finishes Third In NCAA World Series

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SALEM, VIRGINIA - The UW-Eau Claire softball team finished third in the NCAA Division III Championship after being eliminated by Linfield College of Oregon, 22-10, Monday afternoon at the James I. Moyer Sports Complex here.

The two teams were battling through the losers' bracket for a chance at unbeaten Washington University of St. Louis in the championship game of the double elimination tournament at 2:30 p.m. (EDT) today. Both teams had been knocked into the losers' bracket by Washington University's the Blugolds in a 1-0, eight-inning decision and Linfield in a 6-3 verdict. Linfield is the top seed in the eight-team national tournament while Washington University is second and Eau Claire third.

The third place is the highest finish ever by a Blugold softball team in the national tournament. The Blugolds had placed fourth in their two previous World Series appearances in 1999 and 2000. The Blugolds' final record of 38-14 also represents the third best single season win total in school history, surpassed only by the 40-15 and 40-14 marks of the 1999 and 2000 teams, respectively.

The Blugolds had made a living on coming from behind to win contests this year, particularly in the post-season, but their luck ran out against Linfield, as the game ended after five innings on the eight-run rule. The Blugolds had come from a 5-0 deficit to defeat Plattsburgh State of New York, 6-5, Sunday night to reach the contest against Linfield.

The Blugolds took a 1-0 lead against Linfield in the first but the McMinnville, Oregon team exploded for eight runs in the second with the help of seven hits and four Blugold errors. The Blugolds cut the deficit to 8-5 with four runs in their half of the second but Linfield countered with seven more in the top of the third for a 15-5 lead. Eau Claire battled back with four more in the fourth to make it a 15-9 contest but a grand slam homer by Jena Loop capped another seven-run inning in the fifth. The Blugolds did not give up and scored a final run in the bottom of the seventh.

The game will enter the NCAA tournament single game record book on numerous counts: most runs scored by a team with 22 (record was 18 by the College of New Jersey on 5/12/95), most runs by two teams with 32 (record was 21, most recently on 5/14/06), most hits by a team with 22 (record was 19, most recently by Alma in a 15-inning game by 5/15/04), most hits by two teams with 34 (record was 32 by Chapman and Alma on 5/15/04) and most total bases by two teams with 50 (record was 41 by St. Thomas and Concordia on 5/11/06).

The run total was the most ever allowed by a Blugold softball team and the most scored by Linfield this season. The Wildcats had won an NCAA regional tournament game by a 17-1 margin. The previous high by a Blugold opponent was 19 by UW-Platteville on April 10, 1985.

A season-high six errors by the Blugolds allowed Linfield to score eight unearned runs. Three Blugolds pitchers also walked three and hit a batter. Linfield, which came into the game with a .384 team batting average, had four batters with three or more hits including Meredith Brunette who was five for five with four runs batted in as the Wildcats totaled 22 hits. Stephanie Rice was four for five.

**Casey Leisgang** (*Jr.-Seymour*), **Mandy Tschernach** (*Sr.-Rice Lake*) and **Mallory McKinney** (*Sr.-Brooklyn Park, MN/Champlin Park*) all had three hits for Eau Claire with McKinney driving in five runs. **Jill Janke** (*Jr.-Black River Falls*) had two hits in her only two official at bats including the Blugolds' only home run in the World Series, a two-run blast in the fourth inning. The Blugolds rapped out 12 hits total for the game.

Tschernach finished the five games of the World Series with a .647 average while Leisgang hit .412, Janke .400 and McKinney .389 with a team-high nine RBI.

Six Blugold seniors concluded their careers in the tournament with the winningest percentage over a four-year period at .736 (134-48 with 26-17 in 2004, 33-11 in 2005, 37-6 in 2006 and 38