2007 UW-Eau Claire Volleyball Season Preview

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The 2007 UW-Eau Claire volleyball team returns 11 letterwinners but only two starters from last year's NCAA Tournament squad that went 30-4, reaching the 20-win mark for the eighth consecutive season.

In 2006, the Blugolds reached the Sweet 16 before being defeated by UW-Whitewater, who finished tied for third in the NCAA Championship. It was the second year in a row the Blugolds season was cut short by UW-Whitewater in the Sweet 16.

Last season, the Blugolds were Co-Champions with UW-Oshkosh in the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletics Conference (WIAC). It was only the second time in school history the Blugolds finished in first. The 2006 Blugolds led the WIAC in kills per game (15.07), blocks per game (2.88), and services aces per game (2.40). They were also second in hitting percentage (.245) and tied UW-River Falls for second in assists per game (13.67).

The Blugolds will have to look to many new faces this year. Only two starters from last season, senior **Heather Harnell** *(Minnetonka, MN)*and junior **Abby Freiborg** *(Sacred Heart, MN/Renville County West)*, are returning this season.

Harnell enters her senior season with the Blugolds. Harnell played in all 34 matches last season, finished fifth on the team with 206 digs and fourth on the team with 40 service aces. Freiborg enters her junior season with the Blugolds. She finished second on the team with 310 digs and third on the team with 270 kills.

Two other returning players who saw playing time in all 34 matches are **Nikki Peterson** *(Sr.-North St. Paul, MN/North)* and **Emily Haese** *(Jr.-Mishicot, WI)*. Peterson finished third on the team in 2006 with 62 assists, while Haese finished fourth on the team with 298 digs. The other returning players saw limited playing time during the 2006 season, but will look to have a greater impact this season.

First-year head coach Kim Wudi brought in a good recruiting class this season. There will be seven new faces on the team, five of which received All-Conference honors during high school. **Jenny Burzynski** *(Fr.-Stanley, WI/Stanley-Boyd)* was a first team All-County and second team All-Conference selection in high school. She also led her team as a captain to a 2006 WIAA Division III State Championship. **Rachel Ver Voort** *(Fr.-Madison, WI/Middleton)* was a two-time first team All-Conference selection and was Team MVP in her junior and senior seasons.

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