Volleyball Prepares For St. Ben's Tourney

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EAU CLAIRE, Wis. - The UW-Eau Claire volleyball team will head to its third tournament of the year on Friday and Saturday when it competes in the St. Benedict Tournament.

The 5-3 Blugolds fell from 18th to 25th on the latest CSTV/AVCA Division III Coaches Poll. They had split their four matches at the Augsburg Tourney while taking second behind ninth-ranked University of St. Thomas (MN). The team was also second at their home Labor Day Tourney after taking three of the four matches.

Abby Freiborg *(Jr.-Sacred Heart, MN/Renville County West)* and **Jenna Weber** *(Jr.-Antigo)* led the team during the Augsburg contests, as both made the all-tournament team. **Nikki Peterson** *(Sr.-North St. Paul, MN/North)* made the UWEC Labor Day Tourney all-tournament team.

Freiborg leads the Blugolds in kills with 73, or 3.04 per game. **Katie Fox** *(Jr.-Chippewa Falls/Chi-Hi)* and **Lissa Martinez** *(Sr.-Vadnais Heights, MN/White Bear Lake)* are behind her with 62 and 60, respectively. Freiborg's conference-leading 29 aces are also tops, as are **Emily Haese** *(Jr.-Mishicot)* and her 217 sets.

Heather Harnell *(Sr.-Minnetonka, MN)* has 140 digs while Freiborg has 99 to keep the Blugolds in games while three are near the top in blocks. Fox and Weber each blocked 11 and **Cary Rasmussen** *(So.-Sparta)* knocked down 10.

The team's opponents on Friday are Northwestern College (MN) at 3 p.m. and Simpson College (IA) at 5 p.m. Saturday's matches are against St. Benedict (MN) at 10:30 a.m. and Buena Vista University (IA) at 12:30 p.m.

The Blugolds have already faced 5-4 Northwestern and won in three games. The scores were 30-24, 30-23, and 30-19 as the team spread out 45 kills and Freiborg notched seven aces. Kathryne Engel's 122 kills and Steph Koth's 112 make for Northwestern's offense. Engel managed four and Koth got six in the previous matchup.

Simpson is 5-1 with a sweep at the NYU Invitational on four 3-0 games. They?re coming off their only loss of the season, a 3-0 defeat to Coe College (NE). Whitney Oviatt leads the Simpson attack with 55 kills, but Amy Schuster's 53 aren't far behind. The Blugolds are a perfect 5-0 all-time versus Simpson.

St. Ben's has a 3-3 record and has split matches in both the UW-La Crosse Tourney and the Gustavus Triangular. Eau Claire leads the all-time series 13-9 and has won four of the last five.

Buena Vista has lost three in a row and is now 2-4. The last Beavers win was on Sept. 1. With 66 kills, Kelli Luitjens leads the team. The only time Eau Claire has ever faced the Beavers was in a 2002 win.

The St. Benedict Tourney starts at 3 p.m. on Friday and continues through Saturday.

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