Volleyball At Home & On The Road this Week

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EAU CLAIRE, Wis. - The UW-Eau Claire volleyball team prepares for five matches this upcoming week, including a head-to-head conference match and a tournament at Platteville.

The Blugolds are 8-5 overall and have received votes for the CSTV/AVCA Coaches Poll after dropping out last poll.

The team has been in three tournaments, taking second in each of them, including the home UWEC Labor Day Tourney. The others include the Augsburg Tournament and the St. Benedict Tournament. Most recently, Eau Claire lost to eighth-ranked UW-Oshkosh in the only Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (WIAC) match of the year.

As the leader in kills at 3.46 per game, **Abby Freiborg** *(Jr.-Sacred Heart, MN/Renville County West)* has led the offense. Her 39 aces are also most for the Blugolds and the conference. **Jenna Weber** *(Jr.-Antigo)* is third in the WIAC with 26. **Emily Haese** *(Jr.-Mishicot)* has assisted Freiborg the vast majority of the time as she is tops on the team with 11.38 assists per game.

On defense, **Heather Harnell** *(Sr.-Minnetonka, MN)* ranks first for Eau Claire with 4.98 digs per game. Freiborg is next closest with 3.68. **Katie Fox** *(Jr.-Chippewa Falls/Chi-Hi)*, Weber, and **Cary Rasmussen** *(So.-Sparta)* form the wall at the net, blocking 22, 28, and 15, respectively.

The team is last in the WIAC for hitting at a .163 clip, but is second in aces at 126, or 2.86 per game.

The opponents Eau Claire will face include UW-River Falls on Wednesday before the tourney on the weekend. Friday's foes include Cornell College (IA) and Lake Forest College (IL) while Saturday's are against UW-Stout and UW-Platteville. None are in the top 25.

River Falls is fourth in the conference on a 1-1 WIAC mark and a 5-10 overall record, whereas Eau Claire is seventh and 0-1 in WIAC play. As a team, they hit just above Eau Claire at .164. Their main point of attack is Kelsey Scheele, who is second in the conference for kills at 4.06 per game. Eau Claire owns the all-time record 43-34 and has won the past five matches.

Cornell is 5-11 on the year and is led by Kristin Paczosa and her 3.49 kills per game. They are hitting .202. Eau Claire won the only previous matchup between these two teams, a 1997 contest.

The 4-8 Foresters are riding a three-match losing streak. Nicole Baich (3.05 kills/game) and Ashley Cretacci (2.51) lead the attack. Baich also has 53 blocks. The Blugolds are unbeaten against Lake Forest, having a 2-0 all-time record.

Saturday's WIAC teams will not count in the conference records. Stout is 8-5 and eighth in the conference. Platteville is just above the Blugolds at 12-5. Eau Claire is 53-27 historically versus Stout and has won the last five, while going 22-12 against Platteville.

Linda Meyer leads the Blue Devils in kills at 3.22 per game, though Kendra Pagel has 3.02 behind her. Maggie Meixl has the most Stout blocks with 50 while Casey Huntoon marks off 6.56 digs per game. Jenna Welsh's 10.04 assists fuel the offense. Meixl also is fourth in the conference for hitting at .306 while the team hits .208.

Led by Rachel Chapman's 3.66 kills per game, the Pioneers are hitting .207. Rochelle Ripp contributes a team-high 4.46 digs per game while Lisa Bell has blocked 42 on the season. Kelly Laschinger is first on the team and third in the conference for assists with 12.86 per game.

Wednesday's match, which is Youth Night, begins at 7 p.m. The Friday action starts at 6 p.m. while Saturday's opening match is at noon.