

Blugolds To Host NCAA Soccer Playoffs

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EAU CLAIRE, Wis. - The 15th ranked UW-Eau Claire women's soccer team will host its four-team NCAA Division III Regional this Saturday and Sunday.

Out of the 60 teams in the national tournament, the four participating in Eau Claire's opening regional are all ranked in the top 11 for Central Regional rankings. Eau Claire, ranked second in the region will face 11th ranked Wartburg College (IA) at 11 a.m. Saturday. Sixth-ranked Carthage College plays Concordia-Moorhead (MN), ranked seventh in the Central. That match starts at 1:30 p.m. The winners will advance to the second round and face each other at 1 p.m. Sunday to move to round three.

The Blugolds, 18-1-2, are making their third trip ever to the NCAA Tournament and their third in as many years. These will be the first home games Eau Claire has ever had in NCAA Tournament play. Eau Claire was the site of last years Regional play, the site was moved to River Falls after a snowfall made the fields unplayable. Last year Eau Claire advanced to the second round where it lost 2-0 to Wheaton College (IL). That was the second consecutive year the Blugolds were knocked out by Wheaton. The Blugolds defended both their Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (WIAC) regular season and tournament crowns. Both titles were the third in team history.

The team had seven players selected to the All-WIAC team, tied for the most in Eau Claire history with last years squad. Named to the All-WIAC team were Player of the Year defender **Anna Talbot**, forward **Liz Kooistra**, midfielder **Haelee Maurer**, midfielder **Allison Muer**, goalie **Allie Rivard**, defender **Allison Smith**, and forward **Amy Smith**. Head Coach **Sean Yengo** also claimed his third consecutive WIAC Coach of the Year honor. Talbot is the second ever Blugold selected as the Player of the Year. Maria Iazzo of last year's squad was the first ever.

The Blugolds are the top-ranked defense in the WIAC in goals allowed (0.47/game) and shutouts with 14. Rivard leads the league in save percentage with .892 percent on 33 saves. Rivard is also first in goals allowed, allowing only four goals this season. The Blugold defense led by Player of the Year Talbot is first in the league in goals against average (0.46/game) and goals allowed (0.48/game). Offensively the Blugolds rank second in points (8.61/game), goals (2.84/game) and assists per game (2.26). Forward Amy Smith ranks in the top three statistically in points (36), goals (13), and assists (10). Smith is also tied for second with teammate Kooistra for game-winning goals, each have four.

Wartburg who went 16-3-1 will make its first ever NCAA Tournament appearance this weekend. The Knights won the Iowa Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (IIAC) to earn a tournament bid after **Rachel Oswald's** fifth game-winning goal of the season to knock off top-seed and regular season IIAC Champions Loras College. The top-ranked defense in the IIAC lead the league in shutouts (10), goals against average (0.59/game), and goals allowed (0.60/game). Wartburg's offense led the IIAC in shots (21.25/game) and goals (2.70/game). The Knights were also second in the league with 33 assists.

Oswald leads the Knights in points (31), goals (13), and game-winning goals (5). Oswald led the IIAC in goals (13) and was second in the league with 33 points and five game-winning goals. **Lauren Thomas** led the Knights with nine assists and was second in the league in assists (0.47/game). **Rachel Coleman** has 11 wins in the net for Wartburg. Coleman has 39 saves and has allowed 10 goals on the season. Coleman leads the league in goals against average (0.74/game) and she is third in the league with .796 save percentage and second in the league with three shutouts.

The Cobbers of Concordia-Moorhead went 16-3-1 on the season and will make their second consecutive NCAA Tournament appearance. Concordia won its second straight Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) playoff title.