

Men's Basketball Plays Badgers For First Time Ever

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MADISON, Wis. - If nothing else, the UW-Eau Claire men's basketball team can say it faced, and led, the Division I UW-Madison Badgers this season, though the team eventually fell 74-35.

The exhibition game at the Kohl Center was made possible through an agreement with Madison and the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (WIAC) that established a rotation among the Badgers and the WIAC teams.

Eau Claire took its first turn ever at Bo Ryan's squad today and actually jumped out to a 3-2 lead when **Dan Beyer** (*Sr.-Waukesha/Catholic Memorial*) hit a three-pointer the first time Eau Claire touched the ball. Trevon Hughes responded with a Badger trey as Madison took a lead it kept the rest of the way.

The Badgers extended it to 11-3 and then 14-5 at 15:39, but threes by **Ryan Shea** (*Fr.-Duluth, MN/East*) and **Geoff Probst** (*So.-Moose Lake, MN*) helped the Blugolds get to 14-11. Probst came up with some free throws and made it 16-13 before Joe Krabbenhoft layed one in. Eau Claire got within two on an 18-16 score at 11:37 when Probst again nailed a big three. Brian Butch followed with a layup to start a run by Madison, with the home team going up 26-16 with 8:26 to play in the half.

The 10-point lead grew to a 20-point cushion and a 38-18 score on a 12-0 run by Madison. By halftime, Eau Claire cut it down to 15 with a 38-23 score. Eau Claire shot 8-of-25 for 32 percent in the half while going 5-for-12 on three-pointers. Madison shot 56 percent on a 15-of-27 half. They also outrebounded Eau Claire 21-to-8.

After half, Probst cut it down to a 14-point game at 40-26 and 18:47. Madison pushed it to 46-26 with the last points coming on a Butch breakaway dunk. Eau Claire stayed within 20 but never threatened until Jason Bohannon sank one from long range and made the deficit 52-30 at the 13:38 mark.

The Badgers would score the next 13 as Madison ran away with it. Eau Claire scored the final points on a pair of **Michael Mudgett** (*Fr.-Gilman*) free throws to close the game out 74-35.

With the Blugolds' shooting dropping to 19 percent in the second half on 4-of-21 and 12 points, the team ended the game 12-of-46 for 26 percent. The Blugolds shot 32 percent (6-of-19) on threes and 83 percent (5-of-6) on free throws.

The Badgers shot 50 percent for the game while making 28-of-56. The Division I opponent went 46 percent (6-of-13) on threes and 60 percent (12-of-20) from the line. Madison pulled down 47 boards to Eau Claire's 21 and managed 10 steals over two for the Blugolds. The rebounds led to 38 Badger points in the paint while Eau Claire managed eight. Eau Claire had no second chance points while Madison tallied 17.

Probst's 16 points and four three-pointers led the Blugolds with Shea and Beyer next at five each. Beyer and **Steve Hoelzel** (*Sr.-Kaukauna*) led in rebounds with four apiece.

Hughes and Krabbenhoft led the Badger attack with 13 points each while Marcus Landry scored 11. The leading rebounders were Krabbenhoft and Butch at seven, while Butch made off with three steals.

The Blugolds are the fifth WIAC team to play Madison and the Badgers have won each game, averaging a winning margin of 37.6 points. The agreement involves the men's basketball team for each school in the conference and most of the women's basketball teams.

The Division I trend continues next year when Eau Claire faces UW-Green Bay. Larger schools are playing DIII opponents now because the NCAA passed legislation that allows such exhibition games in the preseason. These exhibitions do not count as one of the 25 allowed games for the DIII schools.

Today's Division I school is not ranked in either the AP or ESPN/USA Today preseason polls, but they did receive votes. The Badgers regular season starts on Sunday against Indiana-Purdue Fort Wayne.

Eau Claire starts its actual season on Nov. 16 at the Wartburg Tournament in Waverly, low