

2007-08 Men's Basketball Season Preview

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The UW-Eau Claire men's basketball team returns four starters and 10 letterwinners for the 2007-08 season for Terry Gibbons, who enters his 13th season as the head coach for the Blugolds.

Of the Blugolds' 10 returning letterwinners, 54.2% of last season's total team scoring returns including three of the team's top five scorers. Three players started a combined 58 games and scored an average of 27.2 points per game among them. Shooting percentages will be a key factor for Eau Claire to improve on its offensive efficiency in 2007-08. The Blugolds ranked seventh in three-point field goal percentage, eighth in field goal percentage and ninth in free throw percentages among Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (WIAC) schools last season.

Team rebounding improved last season and will need to continue improving for the Blugolds. Eau Claire improved from being outrebounded by a 2.2 margin in 2005-06 to outrebounding its opponents by a 1.5 margin last season. Offensive rebounding became an area of strength for the Blugolds who ranked third in the WIAC averaging 11.54 offensive rebounds per game. Defensive rebounding will be an area of focus this coming season as the Blugolds ranked eighth in the conference in this category.

Honorable mention All-WIAC performer **Dan Beyer** (*Sr.-Waukesha, Wis./Catholic Memorial*) took big strides forward on the offensive end leading the Blugolds in points (14.5) and rebounds (6.7) from a season ago leading the team in field goal percentage (.525) while finishing second in free throw percentage (.722). Beyer improved his scoring by 4.7 points grabbing 3.0 more rebounds than he did in 2005-06. Beyer posted a conference-best 40-point game at UW-Whitewater which was the most points scored by a Blugold since former All-American Chester Smith accomplished the feat in 1985.

Zack Ryan (*Sr.-Lake Elmo, Minn./Tartan*) brings experience to the point guard position starting every game for the Blugolds each of the last two years. Playing through a thumb injury on his shooting hand, Ryan struggled from the field as his scoring dropped from 10.7 to 6.3 points per game. With his scoring numbers down Ryan improved distributing the basketball ranking seventh in the WIAC with a career-best 3.0 assists per game and ranked eighth in assist/turnover ratio at 1.88.

Geoff Probst (*So.-Moose Lake, Minn.*) started six of 24 games played averaging 6.9 points and 4.0 rebounds per game. Probst is a tough, physical player who can knock down the perimeter shot as he finished fourth in three-point field goals made on the team with 22. Probst played through multiple injuries last season and looks to enter the 2007-08 campaign healthy and ready to learn and improve on his performance from his first year in the WIAC.

Luke Meier (*Sr.-Cross Plains, Wis./Middleton*) also made large contributions to the team last season, playing in all 26 games. Meier was the seventh leading scorer on the team with 131 total points on the season and is one of the most accurate shooters on the team. He went 31 of 40 on free throws (.775) and hit 26 of 53 three-pointers (.491).

The Blugolds will have six freshmen on the team this year, and all will look to make significant contributions throughout the season.

The Blugolds kick off the 2007-08 season with an exhibition game at the University of Wisconsin. From their Eau Claire will start the regular season at the Buzz Levick Tip-Off Tournament hosted by Wartburg College (Iowa) and will play the first-ever basketball game at Wartburg's brand new 30-million dollar Wartburg-Waverly Sports and Wellness Center. The tournament features Aurora University (Ill.) who advanced to the NCAA Tournament in 2004-05, high-scoring Grinnell College (Iowa) and the host Knights who have won the Iowa Conference two of the last three seasons.

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