

Men's Basketball Off Until Holiday Classic

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EAU CLAIRE, Wis. - The UW-Eau Claire men's basketball team has enjoyed a successful young season, but will not play again until Dec. 28-29 when it hosts the four-team Holiday Classic in Zorn Arena.

The Classic will see teams from Jamestown College (ND), Marian College and Viterbo University. Viterbo and Jamestown tip off the Classic at 6 p.m. on Dec. 28, while the second game between Eau Claire and Marian is scheduled for 8 p.m. The next day, the consolation game is at 6 p.m. and the championship follows at 8 p.m.

The Blugolds are on the upswing entering the tournament, having won six of the past seven. For the season, the team has gone 6-3 overall and 2-1 in the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (WIAC). Three of the wins have come by more than 16 while two have been very close. One was in overtime while the other was a two-point victory over Finlandia University (MI) on Saturday.

The team averages 78.2 points per game while opponents score 73.0. The Blugolds have done better from the floor while opponents have bested them from the line and from long range. The Eau Claire shooting percentage is 51.8 percent over 42.1 percent for opponents. Opposing teams make 34.7 percent of threes while the Blugolds knock in 32.8 percent. The Blugolds shoot 61.5 percent from the line while foes have made 75.8 percent of their free throws. Eau Claire barely owns both the rebounding battle (+1.3) and the turnover battle (+0.3).

On an individual level, **Dan Beyer** (*Sr.-Waukesha/Catholic Memorial*) and **Ryan Shea** (*Fr.-Duluth, MN/East*) have been the main contributors. Beyer averages 19.3 points per game and Shea tallies 17.4. Beyer's 7.0 boards per game and 28 total assists also lead. Shea has been a force on defense as well, with a team-high 19 steals and seven blocked shots.

Eau Claire's first opponent, Marian, has gone 6-2 so far this year and rides a four-game winning streak. The offense manages 78.9 points per game while the defense gives up 72.2. The Sabres outshoot opponents from the floor (49.2 percent-to-41.8 percent), from behind the arc (38.5 percent-to-32.2 percent) and on free throws (72.1 percent-to-68.9 percent). They have the rebounding margin by nearly four boards per game. Marian has three scorers averaging double-digits, including Jerid Holewinski (15.0), Jordan Van Ess (12.9) and Kevin Hudak (10.8). Logan Rankin's 6.1 rebounds per game are tops for the Sabres, as are Holewinski's 24 total assists. The Blugolds are 6-0 all-time versus Marian.

On day two of the Classic, Eau Claire will face either Viterbo or Jamestown. Viterbo has a 4-9 record and had a rough 1-5 start to the season. They average 70.3 points per game in comparison to 76.8 for opponents. The big two threats are Eric Ambrose and Cornelius Bardney, both averaging more than 14 points per game. Scott Buschman totals 12.3 per contest and a team-high 10.0 boards. Eau Claire is 4-1 historically against Viterbo.

Jamestown has gone 8-5 this year and got off to a fast 6-2 start. The Jimmies put up 84.7 points per game and allow 77.7. Jake Holen is the main shooter with 19.1 points per game, but Kyle Iverson (16.0 points per game) and Jordan Olson (14.5 points per game) also can rack up the points. Iverson and Olson lead in rebounds per game with 7.2 and 6.8, respectively. If the Blugolds played the Jimmies, it would be the first contest between the two ever.

The Classic begins on Dec. 28 and extends into Dec. 29 in Zorn Arena.

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