

Men's Basketball Hosts Yellowjackets

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EAU CLAIRE, Wis. - The UW-Eau Claire men's basketball team hopes to turn its Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (WIAC) record around Wednesday when UW-Superior comes to Zorn Arena at 7 p.m.

Eau Claire is 10-8 overall and 4-5 in the WIAC. They rank fifth in the standings while Superior is two spots below them. The Yellowjackets are 3-6 in the WIAC and 7-10 overall.

The Blugolds are in the midst of a 13-game run of WIAC teams to finish the year. So far, they have gone 2-4, having lost the last two. The Yellowjackets have dropped their last three. Earlier this season, Superior won 68-59 over Eau Claire to make the all-time record 117-58 in favor of the Blugolds.

The games have been close for Eau Claire, with just six being decided by more than 10 points. The team averages just 1.3 more points per game than opponents and has performed well in those nailbiters, going 4-1 in contests decided by five points or less. The Blugolds get their buckets from the floor, sinking 50.6 percent compared to 44.6 percent for other teams. However, opponents outdo them from the line (74.1 percent-to-65.9 percent) and from long range (34.6 percent-to-33.1 percent).

Eau Claire does have the edge in assists by nearly three a game and rebounds by 1.5. The Blugolds give the ball away about one more time per game, though.

Dan Beyer (Sr.-Waukesha/Catholic Memorial) leads the offensive attack with 18.1 points per game. He needs just five points to reach 1,000 for his career. He would join 38 others who have amassed 1,000 in their Blugold careers. The 18.1 ties for second among WIAC competitors. Beyer's seven boards per game also lead the Blugolds while ranking third in the conference. Beyer shoots 60.1 percent from the floor, fourth among WIAC players.

Ryan Shea (Fr.-Duluth, MN/East) averages 14.7 points per game while **Geoff Probst** (So.-Moose Lake, MN) also hits double-figures with 10.7. **Zack Ryan** (Sr.-Lake Elmo, MN/Tartan) has tallied 51 assists, but Shea (49) and Beyer (47) are right in the mix. As a team, Eau Claire's 14.94 assists per game are only behind UW-Stevens Point's 15.17.

Shea has shined on defense, easily leading in steals with 37 and blocks with 13. His steals number is also the WIAC's best.

Superior has astonishingly close stats to their competitors, having been outscored by 1.5 points per game and outshot overall 48.2 percent-to-48.1 percent. They have bested opponents on threes 38.9 percent-to-38.6 percent and from the line 75.1 percent-to-71.8 percent. Ray Byrns has been exceptional on free throws, just missing one of his 46 attempts for a WIAC-leading 97.8 percent.

They create two more turnovers per game on average and give up nearly five in the rebounding category. The +2.35 turnover margin is second-best in the WIAC, as is their 1.37 assist-to-turnover ratio.

The Blugold defense will be active on Wednesday, as the Yellowjackets spread the ball around well. Four Superior shooters average double-digits, including Jake Smith (17.5), Dwight Hill (16.4), Dan Culy (13.4) and Shane Manor (11.3). All are in the top 20 for the WIAC. Smith and Culy come away with the most boards at 4.9 and 4.6. Hill has 5.18 assists per game, easily the best in the conference.

The Blugolds look to avenge their loss from earlier this season when Wednesday's game begins at 7 p.m.