

Men's Hockey Gets Ready For Conference Battles

Posted: Thursday, February 7, 2008

EAU CLAIRE, Wis. - The UW?Eau Claire men's hockey team has spent the week preparing for a pair of tough Northern Colligate Hockey Association (NCHA) matchups. They will host UW?Superior on Friday night and St. Scholastica (Minn.) on Saturday night.

After an impressive 5-0 victory over nationally ranked UW?River Falls, the team will have no time to look back as they head down the stretch run of the regular season. With an overall record of 9-13-0 and a conference record of 5-6-0, the Blugolds find themselves only three points behind second place UW?River Falls and UW?Stout. However, all of that means very little if the team is unable to come away with a victory against UW?Superior on Friday night at 7:00 p.m. at Hobbs Ice Center. The Yellow Jackets' record is 11-5-6 overall and 5-4-2 in conference play. Saturday night's game is just as important as the St. Scholastica Saints skate in to town for a 7:00 p.m. meeting. As of today, the saints have an overall record of 8-12-2 and a conference record of 3-7-1. The saints trail the Blugolds by only three points in the NCHA standings.

The Blugolds will enter the game Friday night with the sixth lowest scoring average in the conference at 2.27 goals a game. On the defensive side of the equation, it's a different story for the Blugolds as they allow only 2.09 goals a game. That average is good enough to place the team second in the conference.

The Blugolds conference rankings on special teams are consistent with their goals per game rankings. They struggle on the power play converting at a 12.9 percent clip which places them seventh in the conference. However, they are responsible for the conferences second best penalty kill at 84.6 percent.

Individually the Blugolds are lead by **Sean Garrity** (Sr.-North St. Paul, MN/North), **Andrew Johnson** (Jr.-Andover, MN/Anoka), **Greg Petersen** (Jr.-Maple Grove, MN/Totino-Grace), and **Jesse Vesel** (Jr.-Hibbing, MN). These four are the only Blugolds to tally double digits points this season. Garrity leads the team with 22 points. His 22 points consist of 13 assist and 9 goals. Johnson and Petersen are tied with 16 points apiece. Johnson leads the team with 11 goals.

Between the pipes, the Blugolds are led by **Tyler Brigl** (So.-Eagan, MN). On the season, Brigl is 9-12-0 with a goals against average of 2.58 and a saves percentage of .897.

Friday night's opponent, UW?Superior comes to town having won two of their past three games. The only game they did not win out of those was a 1-1 tie to St. Norbert.

The UW-Superior offensive attack is comparable to the Blugolds as they average an even 2 goals a game. On the defensive side, they are slightly behind the Blugolds as well with a 2.36 goals allowed average.

Superior has a power play which is in the conferences' upper half. On the season, they are converting at a 17 percent clip as they have scored on 9 of 53 opportunities. The penalty kill is a different story for this bunch. When down a skater, the Yellow Jackets kill the penalty 78.7 percent of the time.

The Yellow Jackets leading scorer is Kevin Huck. With 11 goals and 10 assists, Huck's points come from all around good offensive play. There are seven other Yellow Jackets along with Huck in double digit points. Freshman, Logan Isley is second to Huck with 17 points.

On Saturday night, the St. Norbert Saints will bring the conferences' fifth best scoring offense and sixth best defense to Hobbs Ice Center.

The Saints' Special teams are in the middle of the pack in the conference. They are fourth on the penalty kill with an 81.7 percent and fifth on the power play converting at 14.5 percent.

The Saints have six players with double digits points. The most dominate Saint Scorer, AJ Tucker leads the way with 25 points on 12 goals and 14 assist. Behind Tucker, Joey Martini, Jordan Baird, and Jordan Chong are tied with 15 points apiece.

The puck is set to drop for both games at 7:00 p.m. on Fr