

Blugolds Sweep, Ready For Showdown With Whitewater

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EAU CLAIRE, Wis. - Matching its season-high offensive output for a doubleheader, the UW-Eau Claire softball team swept a pair of Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (WIAC) games from UW-Stevens Point, 10-5 and 12-4, at wind-swept Gelein Field in Carson Park Saturday afternoon.

The twin killing sets up a showdown with UW-Whitewater at Gelein Field at noon Sunday for conference supremacy. The Warhawks, who beat UW-Superior twice Saturday, lead the WIAC with a 12-2 mark while the Blugolds are now 10-2 in the league. For Whitewater, the Eau Claire matchup is its final doubleheader of the conference campaign, while the Blugolds also have a makeup twin bill with UW-Superior Monday.

On a day more suited for hockey than softball (sustained winds of over 20 mph, wind chill in the mid to upper 20s and intermittent snow showers), the Blugolds rapped 23 hits including nine of the extra base variety. Nine of the Blugold runs were plated on three roundtrippers belted with a strong tailwind.

Earning her 15th and 16th victories of the season on the mound was freshman southpaw **Jenny Ross** (*Mendota Heights, MN/Henry Sibley*). She remained unbeaten for the season as she hurled all but one inning of the doubleheader and yielded only one earned run. In 11 innings of work, she scatted eight hits with no walks and 10 strikeouts. The Blugold defense struggled behind her, committing seven errors in the first game and two in the second game. **Bri Sturm** (*Jr.-Zumbrota, MN/Zumbrota-Mazeppa*) pitched the final inning of the second game which the Blugolds won on the eight-run rule in the bottom of the fifth.

Leading the hit parade Saturday were seniors **Casey Leisgang** (*Seymour*) and **Jill Janke** (*Black River Falls*) with two hits in each game for four total. Leisgang drilled her team-high seventh home run of the season, a two-run shot in the first game. That extended her school career record to 34. Janke plated five runs with her four hits which included one double.

Ross, **Bekki Kidnie** (*So.-St. Paul, MN/Johnson*) and **Michelle Butkus** (*Sr.-Medford*) all totaled three hits in the doubleheader. Kidnie's three-run homer capped a six-run first inning in the opener. Butkus made the Pointers pay for intentionally walking Janke ahead of her to load the bases in the fourth inning of the second game, belting a grand slam to straightaway center to stake the Blugolds to an 8-0 lead at the time. The dinger was Butkus' fourth of the season. She was the second Blugold to hit a grand slam this week as **Betsy Kettinger** (*Jr.-Bloomington, MN/Jefferson*) accomplished the feat against UW-River Falls Wednesday.

After Stevens Point scored its only earned run of the day in the first inning of the first game, the Blugolds sent 11 batters to the plate in the bottom of the inning. They parlayed five hits, a fielders choice, a walk and hit batter into six runs. The 6-1 lead stood until the fourth when two Blugold errors allowed two Pointer runners to score. The Blugolds got one back in the bottom of the inning but Point countered again with two more in the fifth as the Blugolds committed three errors despite the fact that Ross struck out three in the inning. When Leisgang's hit left the yard in the fifth, Ross was secure with a 10-5 lead as she retired eight of the final nine batters she faced.

In the second game, the Blugolds built a 4-0 lead with a single run in the first and three in the second. Butkus' blast broke the game open in the fourth as the Blugolds took a 9-0 lead. The Blugolds needed just three Pointer outs in the fifth to end the game, but Elyse Nelson delivered a three-run homer to cut the deficit to 9-4 and extend the game. A two-run single by Janke and consecutive Pointer errors allowed three runs to score in the bottom of the fifth with no outs to end the contest.

The Blugolds had scored 12 and 10 runs in a doubleheader against UW-Platteville last Sunday. This was the fourth time this year the Blugolds scored 12 runs in a game. The sweep reversed a doubleheader sweep by the Pointers over the Blugolds last year.

The sweep leaves the 11th-ranked (NFCA Division III poll) Blugolds with a 25-7 overall record while Stevens Point slipped to 21-9 overall and 7-7 in the WIAC.

Game One Box Score

Game Two Box Score

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