

Softball Takes Down St. Thomas In Extra Inning Fashion

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EAU CLAIRE, Wis. - The 25th-ranked UW-Eau Claire softball team won 5-4 today in the 2008 NCAA Division III Softball Regional Championship over third-ranked St. Thomas (Minn.) when **Jill Janke** (Sr. -Black River Falls, Wis.) hit a sac fly to center to score **Katie Stalker** (So. -Madison, Wis./La Follette) in the top of the eighth.

The sixth-seeded Blugolds now play for the chance to advance past the regionals when they hit the field on Sunday at 2 p.m. The top-seeded Tommies just have one loss, so they will face the winner of the game between second-seeded UW-Oshkosh and seventh-seeded Aurora University (Ill.).

The win was coach Leslie Huntington's 200th win and she has a 200-96 record all-time. It also snapped St. Thomas' 27-game win streak. This is the second time the Blugolds have broken up a lengthy streak for St. Thomas. In 2005 Eau Claire beat the Tommies to snap a 43-game winning streak, the longest in Division III history.

The Tommies started off with the lead after scoring in the first. Kaitlyn Wightman doubled to lead off the inning. St. Thomas scored the run when Alison Wright had a bunt single. Wightman moved up to third and then Wright got in a rundown between first and second. She ended up at first, but once **Jenny Ross** (Fr.-Mendota Heights, Minn./Henry Sibley) had the ball again in the circle, Wright took off for second. Ross gunned it to second but she was safe. Meanwhile, Wightman sprinted for home and scored.

The Blugolds matched the single tally in the top of the second due to a passed ball. A double and two walks loaded the bases and **Betsy Kettinger** (Jr.-Bloomington, Minn./Jefferson) was able to come in during the passed ball.

With two outs in the third, Eau Claire got another run on a **Bekki Kidnie** (So.-St. Paul, Minn./Johnson) single up the middle. Pinch runner **Sara Baumgartner** (Fr.-Arcadia, Wis.) raced in to put the Blugolds up.

Another run came for Eau Claire in the next inning. Janke had a two-out double to left to score **Casey Leisgang** (Sr.-Seymour, Wis.).

The St. Thomas fifth saw the Tommies collect three runs off four hits and two errors. Kallie Samuelson had a leadoff double and came in during Fiona Lodge's single. Another hit put two runners in scoring position for Wright, who knocked both in with a single through the box.

The Blugolds did not take long to tie it up, however. Leisgang led off the sixth with a blast to dead center and made it 4-4. Leisgang extended her home run record to 37 with the blast. She is one away from tying the conference career mark. She is tied for 11th in Division III history.

Neither team had much chance to take the lead until the eighth. Stalker led off and was able to make it to second because of an error by the first baseman. A walk and a sac bunt followed to move two runners into scoring position. Janke then hit a rope that the centerfielder snagged as Stalker came in.

The bottom of the eighth was not without some excitement, however. With two out, St. Thomas got a single. Olivia Graham hit a moon shot to right, but **Tamara Zeman** (So.-Lodi, Wis.) caught it at the wall.

Ross went all eight and allowed nine hits but walked none. She struck out six as she improved to 22-2. Maria Bye pitched the final three and two-thirds inning to get the loss, her first of the year. She gave up two runs - one earned. Her innings saw one hit with two walks and a pair of K's. Marta Radcliffe started and gave up three runs - two earned. Eau Claire batters got eight hits and four walks off her while striking out four times.

Offensively, three Blugolds had two hits. Leisgang went 2 for 2 with two runs and an RBI. Janke's 2-for-4 game saw two RBI's while Kidnie's saw one.

The next Blugolds game is at 2 p.m. on Sunday while St. Thomas' is at noon.

Eau Claire-St. Thomas Box Score

