

Softball Uses Big First Inning To Win First Game At Nationals

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SALEM, Va. - The UW-Eau Claire women's softball team got off to a good start at the 2008 NCAA Division III Championship, defeating Ithaca College (N.Y.) 8-0 in six innings at the James I. Moyer Sports Complex today.

The Blugolds and head coach Leslie Huntington picked up where they left off last weekend.

"Possibly a little momentum carried over from last weekend in the regional," Huntington said. "We just came out real aggressive at the plate."

Ithaca experienced that aggressiveness as Eau Claire (33-11) jumped out to an early lead with five runs in the first inning. The Blugolds were able to capitalize on a breakdown by Ithaca (34-11). While **Casey Leisgang** (Sr.-Seymour, Wis.) struck out to start the game, she was able to reach first base after a dropped ball due to a wild pitch. **Tamara Zeman** (So.-Lodi, Wis.) then reached base, attempting a sacrifice bunt, after an error was committed by the second baseman. With two on and no out **Jill Janke** (Sr.-Black River Falls, Wis.) was hit by a pitch to load the bases. Leisgang would then score when **Michelle Butkus** (Sr.-Medford, Wis.) reached on a fielder's choice. Janke and Zeman were next to score following a **Jenny Ross** (Fr.-Mendota Heights, Minn./Henry Sibley) single to left. Another single, this one to right field, by **Kristi Doucette** (Jr.-Green Bay, Wis./Ashwaubenon) would allowed Butkus to score and during the next at-bat Ross went home following an error by the catcher to put the Blugolds up 5-0. The Blugolds capitalized on three Ithaca errors in the inning.

The early lead against a good Ithaca team helped boost Ross and the Blugolds' confidence.

"It definitely helps me to feel a lot more comfortable when I have some runs up on the board," Ross said. "It takes a lot pressure off the defense and I think once we get our bats going, it helps our defense to flow."

After two scoreless innings, Eau Claire would add to its lead in the fourth with another run. **Katie Stalker** (So.-Madison, Wis./La Follette) used her speed to reach first after singling to third. A Leisgang ground-out advanced Stalker to second and a wild pitch during the next at-bat allowed her to move to third. Zeman then singled to left to bring Stalker home. The game ended with the eight-run rule after Leisgang had a bases loaded single to center to drive in two runs. **Tessa Pecha** (Sr.-Eau Claire, Wis./North) and **Sara Baumgartner** (Fr.-Arcadia, Wis.) both scored in the inning.

Seven Blugolds each picked up one hit during the game, while four combined for seven RBIs. Leisgang and Ross led Eau Claire with two RBIs. Eight different Blugolds also scored runs today. Ithaca's Erica Cutspec led the game with two hits in three at bats.

Ross improved to 24-2 on the season after pitching six innings. She faced 21 batters, striking out five and allowing three hits. Ithaca's Carly Myers was given the loss to drop her record to 19-5. She pitched five innings but allowed six runs, five of which were earned, on four hits. She was only able to strike out two Blugolds.

Eau Claire will now play again Saturday at 6:30 p.m. (EDT) against Muskingum (Ohio).

Eau Claire-Ithaca Box Score

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