

## 2008-09 Men's Hockey Season Preview

*Posted: Thursday, October 23, 2008*

EAU CLAIRE, Wis. - Coming off one of its most successful seasons in school history, the UW-Eau Claire men's hockey team returns a majority of the team from a season ago, including four All-conference players, and will attempt to build on last year's accomplishments.

Last season Eau Claire finished with an overall record of 11-16-1 including a 6-7-1 mark in the Northern Collegiate Hockey Association. The 11 overall wins were the most by an Eau Claire team since the 2003-04 season when the Blugolds went 14-12-1. The team's NCHA record was good enough for the Blugolds to finish in fifth place in the conference. In the NCHA playoffs, the Blugolds won their first-round series against Superior and then lost to Stout in overtime of the semifinals. Prior to the 2007-08 first-round playoff series victory, the Blugolds had never won a series since joining the NCHA.

This season 19 letterwinners return for the Blugolds, while they only lose eight. Matt Loen, who served as the interim head coach last season, will guide the Blugolds again this season after being named the permanent head coach last spring. Both of his assistant coaches, Bob Thorp and Erik Strand are also back with the team.

**Sean Garrity** (*Sr.-North St. Paul, Minn./North*) highlights the returners for Eau Claire. Last season he led the team with 26 points and 15 assists and was second on the team with 11 goals. Garrity earned first team All-Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference honors, as well as honorable mention All-NCHA honors a season ago. Garrity is also the Blugolds' two-time MVP, earning the honor last season and the season before.

Two-time letterwinner **Greg Petersen** (*Sr.-Maple Grove, Minn./Totino-Grace*) also returns for Eau Claire. The defender was the Blugolds' only first team All-NCHA pick last year, while he was also honored as a first team All-WIAC selection. He finished second on the team with 13 assists and third with 18 points while picking up five goals.

Another honorable mention All-NCHA recipient back this year is **Andrew Johnson** (*Sr.-Andover, Minn./Anoka*) . He completed the 2007-08 season leading the team with 13 goals and was second on the team with 19 points. Johnson, Petersen, Garrity and **Dan Fina** (*Sr.-Fontana, Wis./Glenbard South*) will serve as team captains this season for the second year in a row. Fina finished last year fifth on the team with 10 points (three goal, seven assists).

Last season's freshman of the year and WIAC All-Sportsmanship selection **John Kearns** (*So.-Chicago, Ill./Maine South*) will see action on defense for the Blugolds this year. In addition to Kearns and Petersen, six others join them on the defensive side, five of whom are returning letterwinners.

Honorable mention All-NCHA and All-WIAC goalie **Tyler Brigl** (*Jr.-Eagan, Minn.*) will once again be between the pipes this season. Brigl made a big impact for the Blugolds last season. He was in-goal almost 1614 minutes out of a possible 1700:48. In all he stopped 616 pucks and allowed 68 goals in 27 games for a goals-against-average of 2.53 and a save percentage of .901. He finished the season with an 11-15-1 record and picked up four shutouts, a single season record for the Blugolds. He also comes into the 2008-09 season with a total of five shutouts, a Blugold career record.

The Blugolds begin their season Saturday with a non-conference home game against St. Scholastica. The puck is set to drop at 7 p.m. at Hobbs Ice Center.

2008-09 Roster

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