

WIAC Volleyball Tournament Preview: #1 UW-Eau Claire vs. #8 UW-Stout

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EAU CLAIRE, Wis. - After clinching a share of the WIAC regular season championship with UW-Oshkosh, the Blugolds prepare for its opening round match of the WIAC Conference tournament. The Blugolds are in search for their first-ever conference tournament championship.

By winning its regular season match on October 4 against UW-Oshkosh, Eau Claire earned the No. 1 seed in the tournament and will host the No. 8 seeded UW-Stout on Tuesday evening. Playing one of the tougher non-conference schedules in the country, the Blugolds finished the regular season with a seven-match winning streak, to bring its overall record to 21-10 along with a 7-1 mark in WIAC play.

In last year's WIAC tournament, the Blugolds lost their semifinal match to then-Cinderella UW-Platteville in four sets before falling to UW-La Crosse in the third place match in five sets. However, Eau Claire received an at-large bid into the NCAA tournament.

In a balanced offensive output, Eau Claire is led by a dynamic duo of seniors. **Abby Freiborg** (*Sacred Heart, Minn./Renville County West*) and **Emily Haese** (*Mishicot, Wis.*) have provided one of the top one-two punches in the conference. Freiborg registered her 1,000th kill on Saturday and leads the Blugolds with 2.79 kills per game, good for fourth in the conference. With 57 service aces, Freiborg also leads the team and is second in the WIAC with 0.50 aces per game. Haese has collected 1,080 assists on the season, and at nearly 10 assists per game ranks second in the conference.

Defensively, **Lindsey Smith** (*Jr.-Maple Lake, Minn.*) has been consistent in the back row all season, leading the team with 3.95 digs per game, which ranks her seventh in the WIAC. **Katie Fox** (*Sr.-Chippewa Falls, Wis./Chi-Hi*) has been a force in the front row, ranking fourth in the conference with 0.90 blocks per game, and 104 total blocks on the season.

UW-Stout finished the regular season with a 5-24 overall record, and a 1-7 mark in WIAC play. The Blue Devils are led by Maggie Meixl's 2.52 kills per game and Alicia Mizer's 4.41 digs.

On October 15, the Blugolds defeated the Blue Devils in three sets, 25-12, 25-7 and 25-21. Eau Claire also owns the all-time series against Stout with a 55-27 record. The Blugolds last loss to Stout came on September 14, 2005 in three sets. Tuesday's match is slated to begin at 7 p.m. at the McPhee Physical Education Center.

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