

## Men's Hockey Set For NCHA Quarterfinal Games

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EAU CLAIRE, Wis. - This Friday and Saturday the UW-Eau Claire men's hockey team will be in Menomonie to face UW-Stout in the first round of the Northern Collegiate Hockey Association (NCHA) playoffs.

The two teams will play at 7:30 p.m. both nights at the Dunn County Ice Arena. Should the teams split wins, a 20-minute mini-game will be played Saturday night. The winner will move on to the NCHA semifinals next weekend. The semifinals and the championship games are both single-elimination contests.

Eau Claire (13-11-1) enters the weekend as the No. 7 seed while the Blue Devils (18-5-2) are the No. 2 seed and ranked third in the nation. The Blugolds have a difficult task ahead of them as Stout is currently on a hot streak entering the playoffs. The Blue Devils are on a 10-game non-losing streak and have won their last five contests. The Blugolds on the other hand are on a five-game losing streak.

The Blugolds have had a season of streaks this year and will look to end their losing streak this weekend. Eau Claire started the season 6-0 and then went 1-4 in its next five. Over the next six games, the Blugolds went 5-1 before ending the regular season 1-6-1.

In two games against the Blue Devils earlier this season, Eau Claire fell short both times, losing 3-1 at home in January and 2-0 in Menomonie in November. Last season the Blugolds faced the Blue Devils in the NCHA Semifinals and fell in a close 3-2 battle in overtime. To get to the semifinals last year Eau Claire had to knock off the No. 4 seed UW-Superior Yellowjackets in Superior. It took two games plus the mini-game for the Blugolds to take down the Yellowjackets and advanced past the first round for the first time in program history.

**Sean Garrity** (Sr.-North St. Paul, Minn./North) enters the weekend leading the Blugolds with 26 points, coming from 12 goals and 14 assists. **Joe Bluhm** (Jr.-Red Wing, Minn.) leads the Blugolds with 14 goals while **Jesse Vesel** (Sr.-Hibbing, Minn.) leads with 15 assists.

Between the pipes, **Tyler Brigl** (Jr.-Eagan, Minn.) has played almost 1,300 minutes and holds a .904 save percentage with a 2.40 goals-against-average. He has 491 saves on the season.

As a team the Blugolds have outshot opponents in all but five games and have scored 81 goals while allowing 63. Eau Claire is ranked third in the conference for average shots per game with 35.96. Stout is second in the same category with 36.64 shots per game. The Blue Devils have allowed 68 goals this year while scoring 109 themselves.

The Blue Devils have the conference's top two scorers. Derek Hanson leads the conference and the team with 37 points (14 goals, 23 assists) and Joel Gaulrapp has 34 points (17 goals, 17 assists). In the net, Matt Koenig has just over 1,300 minutes of time on the ice and holds a 2.44 goals-against-average and a .923 save percentage, coming up with 633 saves.

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