

Offense Explodes As Softball Cruises To A Sweep

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WINONA, Minn.- Heading into the homestretch of the 2009 season, the 18th-ranked UW-Eau Claire softball team outscored St. Mary's (Minn.) 21-2 in a two-game sweep this afternoon at SMU Field.

Winning the opener 12-1 and the nightcap 9-1, the Blugolds move to 27-8 on the season. The two losses give St. Mary's an 18-16 record overall.

As a team, Eau Claire batted a combined 26-for-59 (.440), while striking out just five times. The Blugolds are batting .357 this season, while holding opponents to a .258 average.

In game one, Eau Claire wasted little time putting the game out of reach. As they've done all season, the one-two lefty duo of **Katie Stalker** (Jr.-Madison, Wis./LaFollette) and **Aleisha Harper** (Fr.-Mondovi, Wis./Eau Claire North) got things rolling with back-to-back singles to lead off the game. After a sacrifice bunt moved the two runners to second and third, **Ainsley Klar** (Jr.-La Crosse, Wis.) came through with a single, picking up an RBI as Stalker scored and Harper crossed home on an error by the St. Mary's catcher, giving the Blugolds a 2-0 lead. Klar has been clutch with runners in scoring position this season, batting at a .485 clip. Stalker and Harper have been spark plugs for the offense, scoring 31 percent of Eau Claire's runs (75 of 241).

The run support early would be all Blugold hurler **Ashley Meinen** (Fr.-Chippewa Falls, Wis./McDonnel) would need en route to her eighth win of the year. After giving up one run in the bottom of the first, Meinen buckled down to allow just two hits from then on. Eau Claire's defense was equally stellar for both games, going errorless in the field for the fifth and sixth time this year.

The second inning saw the Blugolds plate five runs, including a two-run homerun from right fielder **Tamara Zeman** (Jr.-Lodi, Wis.), her second of the year. Leading 7-1, Eau Claire went scoreless in the third before tacking on five more runs in the fourth and fifth to win by the mercy rule.

Three Blugolds had double-digit hit totals, as Harper led the way going a perfect 4-for-4 at the plate with two runs scored. The second baseman is batting a cool .457 on the year. Stalker was equally as productive, going 3-for-4 with three runs scored, while Klar went 2-for-4 with three RBI's and a run scored.

Game two provided the same scenario, with Eau Claire dominating offensively, scoring in five of the six innings played. Senior **Bri Sturm** (Zumbrota, Minn./Zumbrota-Mazeppa) pitched a gem, surrendering a lone run on five hits while striking out five for her seventh win. In her last four appearances, the southpaw has given up a miniscule five runs in 17 innings of work.

Stalker and Harper were the top hitters again for Eau Claire, hitting a collective 6-for-8 with five runs scored and three driven in. **Meghan O'Hearn** (So.-Woodbury, Minn.) was 2-for-3 with a double and a run scored, and designated player **Kristi Doucette** (Sr.-Green Bay, Wis./Ashwaubenon) went 2-for-4 with an RBI.

The Blugolds head to Whitewater tomorrow for a rematch of last year's National Championship contest. The 7th-ranked Warhawks are 29-3 and 14-0 in WIAC play, clinching the regular season conference crown with a sweep of UW-Oshkosh this afternoon. Two sweeps in the final conference games of the season for Eau Claire would mean a share of the title. Tomorrow's games are set to begin at 3 p.m.

Game One Box Score

Game Two Box Score

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