

Softball Eliminated In WIAC Tourney

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SUPERIOR, Wis.- The 20th-ranked UW-Eau Claire softball team saw its conference tournament appearance end abruptly, losing its opening round game to fifth-seed UW-River Falls 7-6, before losing its final game to fourth-ranked and top-seed UW-Whitewater 4-2.

With an overall record of 27-14, the fourth-seeded Blugolds will now wait to see if they get an at-large bid into the NCAA Division III Championships, which begin next weekend. Selections will take place Monday, May 4 beginning at 10 a.m. The selection show will air live on NCAA.com.

The Blugolds are now 53-39 all-time in WIAC tournament play.

The Blugolds, who entered today with a .338 team batting average, managed just 14 hits in 56 at-bats for a .250 average. The defense also struggled, making four combined errors in the field. On the year, Eau Claire has committed 76 errors, the highest total since 1998, when the club had 78 miscues.

Against the Falcons, Eau Claire jumped out to an early 2-0 lead in the bottom of the second on a **Jenny Janke** (Fr.-Black River Falls, Wis.) homerun. The blast was Janke's team-leading fourth of the season. The lead would be short-lived as River Falls exploded for five runs in the top of the third, capitalizing on three hits and three Blugold errors. Eau Claire pulled within one run in the home half of the third, scoring two runs with two outs. A single up the gut from **Kristi Doucette** (Sr.-Green Bay, Wis./Ashwaubenon) plated **Ainsley Klar** (Jr.-La Crosse, Wis./Aquinas) and **Aleisha Harper** (Fr.-Mondovi, Wis./Eau Claire North), making it a 5-4 game. River Falls got some insurance in the fifth inning, extending its lead to 7-4. A late two-run rally for Eau Claire fell short in the sixth inning, as the Falcons escaped with the victory.

Bri Sturm took the loss in the circle, giving up five earned runs on eight hits. Janke led the offense, going 2-for-2 with the homerun, two RBI's and two runs scored. Harper and **Katie Stalker** (Jr.-Madison, Wis./LaFollette) each went 1-for-3 with a run scored, while Harper knocked in two runs with a double in the sixth.

In the elimination game, both teams struggled to find offense early on. Eau Claire went hitless until the fourth inning, and the Warhawks managed just two hits in the first three innings. Whitewater finally ended the scoring drought with two runs in the bottom of the fourth. Eau Claire answered with a run of its own in the fifth on a **Tamara Zeman** (Jr.-Lodi, Wis.) single that scored **Sara Baumgartner** (So.-Arcadia, Wis.), who had tripled to lead off the inning. The Blugolds tied the game at 2-2 in the sixth on **Bekki Kidnie's** (Jr.-St. Paul, Minn./Johnson) third homerun of the season. But the Warhawks would not be denied, as they connected on two solo homeruns in the bottom of the sixth to seal the Blugolds' fate.

Sturm again was credited with loss, giving her a 7-7 record. She pitched four innings, giving up one earned run and five hits. Freshman **Ashley Meinen** (Fr.-Chippewa Falls, Wis./McDonnell) pitched two innings of relief, giving up two runs and striking out two. Baumgartner and Kidnie each went 2-for-3 at the plate, while Stalker chipped in going 2-for-4.

Eau Claire-River Falls Box Score

Eau Claire-Whitewater Box Score

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