

Women's Basketball Upsets La Crosse, Moves on to WIAC Tournament Semis

By: Kevin Meinholz, Sports Information Director

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LA CROSSE, Wis. (UWECBlugolds.com) - The UW-Eau Claire women's basketball team upset No. 3-seed UW-La Crosse in the first round of the 2010 Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Tournament with a 61-57 victory over the Eagles at Mitchell Hall tonight.

The win, the third this season over the Eagles and ninth in a row, marked head coach Tonja Englund's 200th career victory. The Blugolds also beat La Crosse in Zorn Arena 61-55 on Dec. 5 and at La Crosse 68-62 on Jan. 23. The Blugolds are now 10-16 overall while La Crosse ends the season at 18-8.

Eau Claire will now face conference champion and No. 1-seed UW-Whitewater in the semifinals Thursday. Action will get underway at 6 p.m. at Kachel Gymnasium in Whitewater. Last year, the Blugolds also faced the Warhawks in a WIAC Tournament semifinal contest in Whitewater and Eau Claire came away with a 61-34 victory. The Blugolds split with the Warhawks during the regular season this year.

La Crosse came into the game tonight hot, winning its final four regular season games and six out of the last seven. The Eagles' most recently defeated UW-Stevens Point, which is the WIAC's No. 2-seed, by 19 points last Saturday (Feb. 20). The Blugolds, on the other hand, came in winning just two of their last seven.

Hannah Mesick (Jr.-Chatfield, Minn.) had a big game for Eau Claire and capped it off with a block to help preserve the Blugolds' win. With only two seconds left and the Blugolds up by just two (59-57), Mesick blocked a Melissa Lang shot, her fourth of the game, and recovered the ball. She was then fouled and drained two free throw shots to put the Blugolds back up by four with less than a second to go.

Mesick recorded her 10th double-double of the season tonight as she tied for a game-high 17 points while also pulling down a game-high 12 rebounds. She now has a chance on Thursday to reach the 1,000-point mark for her career as she has 983 after tonight's game.

Laura Olson (So.-Osseo, Wis./Osseo-Fairchild) also played a key role in the game tonight, hitting five three-pointers, three in the first half and two in the second, to tie Mesick with 17 points.

Sarah Bingea (Fr.-Delano, Minn.) added 11 points while tying Mesick for a game-high four assists. **Jodi Lindner** (Sr.-Neillsville, Wis.) had a game-high three steals to go along with six points and six rebounds. **Ellen Plendl** (So.-Chippewa Falls, Wis./McDonell) was in foul trouble much of the night and played only 17 minutes before fouling out. However, she blocked five shots, a season-high for a game and just one shy of a school record.

The first half was played extremely close and La Crosse had a two-point lead into halftime, but the Blugolds came out in the second half on a 10-0 run, holding the Eagles scoreless for the first five minutes. The Blugolds led by as much as 12 in the second half while La Crosse was able to get to within two twice the rest of the way.