

Volleyball Returns Strong Group; Season Kicks off Friday

By: Kevin Meinholz, Sports Information Director

Posted: Wednesday, September 1, 2010 at 2:35 AM

EAU CLAIRE, Wis. (UWECBlugolds.com) - After making it to the NCAA Division III Tournament for the fifth year in a row last season, the UW-Eau Claire volleyball team looks to build on its successes this season, which begins Friday.

The Blugolds return 12 letterwinners, including three players who were named honorable mention recipients on the All-WIAC team a year ago. Only four newcomers have been added to this year's roster, two junior transfers and two freshmen.

Returners who appeared on the All-WIAC honorable mention list last year are **Emily Zupon** (Sr.-Antigo, Wis.), **Danielle Lucia** (Sr.-St. Cloud, Minn./Apollo) and **Rachel Ver Voort** (Sr.-Madison, Wis./Middleton). Zupon led the Blugolds last year with 317 kills while Lucia had the second most to go along with the team's second-best hitting percentage (.290). Ver Voort led the team with 33 service aces while she also finished with 277 digs.

The Blugolds also return their top two blockers, **Liz Amici** (Jr.-Whitewater, Wis.), who recorded 115 blocks and Lucia, who finished with 106. Also back are the team's top two setters from last year, **Emily Neave** (So.-Salem, Wis./Westosha Central) (870 assists) and **Amanda Lessner** (Sr.-Watertown, Wis.) (489 assists).

Last season the Blugolds finished with a 31-8 overall record and tied for third in the conference. This season, the Blugolds were picked to finish second in the league, according to the conference's sports information directors while they received two first-place votes.

The Blugolds start the season at home this weekend as the host the five-team Labor Day Classic. Following the opening weekend, the Blugolds will be at home for just two more stretches during the year. They will play at McPhee Sept. 15, 17 and 18 along with Oct. 15 and 16. The rest of the season they will be on the road.

Action is set to get underway at 3 p.m. as the Blugolds face Northwestern College (Minn.), which has won the UMAC title each of the last three seasons.