

Softball Falls Just Short in WIAC Tournament Championship

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RIVER FALLS, Wis. (UWECBlugolds.com) - After advancing to the WIAC Tournament championship game with a 4-0 victory over 22nd-ranked UW-La Crosse, the UW-Eau Claire softball team came up just short against UW-River Falls 5-4 at Ramer Field.

River Falls earned the WIAC's automatic bid to the NCAA Championship, which begins May 12 with regional play. Eau Claire, which will serve as a host for the NCAA regionals May 12-16, will now have to wait until tomorrow to see if they earn an at-large bid to the tournament. Selections will be announced on NCAA.com at 11 a.m. (Central) Monday.

Eau Claire (29-14) advanced to the WIAC Tournament championship game after beating La Crosse 4-0 early in the day. The Blugolds, who fell to La Crosse three times this season, including once in the tournament already, outhit the Eagles 12-4 today.

The Blugolds got things going with three runs in the opening inning and added another in the bottom of the fifth. **Sara Baumgartner** (Sr.-Arcadia, Wis.), **Jess Freagon** (Jr.-Chippewa Falls, Wis./McDonell) and **Emily Muller** (Jr.-Lancaster, Wis.) all scored in the bottom of the first while Freagon crossed home plate in the fifth to give Eau Claire a 4-0 lead.

In the championship game against UW-River Falls, the Blugolds came out strong and built a 2-0 lead after three innings. Baumgartner scored a run in the first inning while Freagon nailed a homer to left field in the third.

While the Falcons scored a run in both the fourth and fifth innings to tie the game at 2-2, the Blugolds went back in front after Baumgartner and **Haley Williams** (Fr.-Waunakee, Wis.) scored in the bottom of the fifth.

With the score 4-2 in favor of Eau Claire heading into the seventh, River Falls got things going in the seventh and scored three runs to take a 5-4 lead. The Blugolds had opportunities to come back in the bottom of the seventh but left two runners on base to give the Falcons a 5-4 win.

In the championship game, **Ashley Meinen** (Jr.-Chippewa Falls, Wis./McDonell) got the start and pitched 5.2 innings. She recorded four strikeouts while giving up two runs and five hits. **Emma Wishau** (Fr.-Waterford, Wis./Union) was given the loss after giving up three runs in 1.1 innings. Wishau also pitched the complete first game against La Crosse to earn the win.