

Men's Hockey Opens Playoffs Against St. Norbert

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EAU CLAIRE - The eighth-seeded UW-Eau Claire men's hockey team will open the Northern Collegiate Hockey Association playoffs against top-seeded and top-ranked St. Norbert College in a two-game quarterfinal series at the Cornerstone Community Center.

The Blugolds come into the series with a 3-22-1 lifetime record against the Green Knights. Eau Claire hasn't defeated St. Norbert since a 5-4 overtime win Jan. 21, 1995. The Blugolds have lost 23 of the last 24 meetings, playing to a 4-4 tie in the other game.

Eau Claire played the Green Knights tough earlier this year dropping a close 5-4 decision at home. The Blugolds scored the first goal of the game and were tied with St. Norbert 2-2 early in the second period. Eau Claire fell behind 4-2 but closed to within one goal twice before losing.

The Blugolds limp into the playoffs with losses in eight of their last nine games. Eau Claire hasn't won since a 4-2 win over UW-Stevens Point Dec. 11.

Rob Ouimette (*Sr.-Iron Bridge, ONT/Leamington District*) leads Eau Claire with 34 points on 19 goals and 15 assists. Ouimette's 19 goals are second in the NCHA and his 34 total points are tied for sixth.

Dave Coleman (*So.-Whitby, ONT/Leo J. Austin*) is second on the Blugolds with 24 points followed by **Pete Eloranta** (*Sr.-River Falls*) with 23. **Phil Cherneski** (*Sr.-Thompson, MAN/RDPC*) has scored 22 points while **Ben Manny** (*Sr.-Chippewa Falls/Chi-Hi*) adds 21. Manny's 13 goals are second on the team.

Goalie **Steffan Braunlich** (*Jr.-Playa del Rey, CA/Loyola*) leads the NCHA in saves with 670 saves. Braunlich allows 4.05 goals a game for a .901 save percentage.

The top-ranked Green Knights have won the last two NCHA championships and reached the NCAA final last year before falling in overtime to Middlebury. St. Norbert enters these playoffs with a 20-2-3 record and a school-record 22-game winning streak. The Green Knights also have a 46-game win streak on their home ice.

St. Norbert features 13 players with double-digit points led by Jason Deitsch's 38 points with 27 points coming off assists. Connor Hughes is second with 29 points followed by Spencer Carbery with 25.

Goalie Kyle Jones is second in Div. III with a 1.54 goals against average and is third in save percentage at .934. Jones had a 151 minutes shutout streak snapped in St. Norbert's last game.

A 20-minute mini-game will be played if the two teams split or tie both games. The mini-game will be played following Saturday's game, if necessary. Both games are scheduled to begin at 7:05 p.m.

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