

Men's Basketball Tops River Falls, Clinches Six Seed

Posted: Saturday, February 19, 2005

RIVER FALLS - The UW-Eau Claire men's basketball team shot 53.7 percent from the floor in a 75-62 victory over UW-River Falls today in the regular season finale, earning the Blugolds the six seed for next week's Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference playoffs.

Eau Claire finished the regular season with an overall record of 13-12 and 6-10 in WIAC action. The Blugolds will head to UW-Oshkosh this Tuesday to battle the third-seed Titans in the first round of postseason action. Eau Claire has not won at Oshkosh since 1995, a span of 10 straight road games. The Blugolds split with the Titans this season, winning 64-54 at home but losing 67-60 on the road. River Falls finishes at 8-16 overall and 4-12 in conference play, tied with UW-La Crosse for the worst conference mark. However, the Falcons win the tiebreaker over the Eagles and will head to top-seeded UW-Stevens Point on Tuesday.

The battle between the Blugolds and Falcons was played extremely close as the game was tied on seven occasions and the lead changed five times. Eau Claire took a 12-4 lead early in the game behind a five points from **Casey Drake** (*Sr.-Rhinelander*) and a slam by **Tyler Birkel** (*Jr.-Spring Valley*). The Falcons then used a 7-2 run to pull within three points but Eau Claire widened the lead by scoring five unanswered points. With the Blugolds on top 23-15, the Falcons went on a 14-4 run to finish the half with a 29-27 lead heading into the locker room.

Eau Claire led for most of the half, taking its initial lead with 16:22 left in the half and River Falls finally tied the score with 3:13 to play in the first half. Drake led all players with 10 points at the half.

The Blugolds immediately tied the game on a jumper by Drake to start the second half. A **Dan Archambault** (*Sr.-Oshkosh/West*) shot from downtown five minutes into the half gave Eau Claire a 39-38 lead but the Falcons went on a 9-3 run to take a 49-42 lead with 11:49 left to play. The Blugolds battled back and with 7:50 remaining in the game tied the score at 53 on another three-pointer from Archambault. With the score knotted at 55, **Will Jefferson** (*Sr.-Wausau/East*) converted on back-to-back lay-ups to spark a 9-0 run and give the Blugolds a little breathing room. Archambault sank six straight free-throw attempts in the final 1:09 to seal the 75-62 victory over the Falcons.

Eau Claire shot 19-of-54 (53.7 percent) from the floor in the win while holding River Falls to 22-of-57 (38.6 percent). The Blugolds committed just 10 fouls in the game, resulting in only eight Falcon free-throw attempts.

Drake led the way to the win with 22 points while Archambault finished with 21 points. Jefferson contributed 13 points, five rebounds and three assists in the win and **Kale Proksch** (*Jr.-Chaseburg/Westby*) finished one point away from a double-double with 10 rebounds and nine points.

The Falcons were led by Scott Kelly with 16 points while Jeff Holt added 13 and Hans Hoeg pitched in 12 points in a losing effort.

The Blugolds begin postseason action this Tuesday at 7:00 p.m. at Oshkosh.

Eau Claire-River Falls Box Score

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