

## Softball Splits With No. 1 St. Thomas, Ends Record Win Streak

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ROSEMOUNT, Minn. - The UW-Eau Claire softball team earned a doubleheader split with defending national champion and top-ranked St. Thomas (MN), effectively ending the Tommies' NCAA Division III record of 43 consecutive wins here today at the Rosemount Irish Sports Dome.

The Blugolds won the opener of the doubleheader by a score of 8-7 and lost a tough battle in the nightcap 4-2. Eau Claire moves to 2-2 on the season after last night's doubleheader split with Gustavus while St. Thomas moves to 3-1 on the year. The Tommies carried a 41-game win streak into the UST Dome Invitational this weekend and were just four wins shy of tying Arizona's NCAA all-division record for consecutive wins after sweeping a doubleheader from Buena Vista (IA) yesterday. A sweep of all six games the Tommies play this weekend would have tied the all-division record.

The Blugold win today came in a roller-coaster game that saw the Tommies score two runs in the first inning and another in the second for a 3-0 lead. Eau Claire took its first lead of the game in the bottom of the third inning when **Amanda Bretl** (So.-New London) led things off with a walk. **Casey Leisgang** (Fr.-Seymour) followed with another walk and **Rachel Paulus** (So.-Wisconsin Rapids/Lincoln) moved the runners to second and third with a sacrifice bunt. The Tommies then chose to intentionally walk **Mallory McKinney** (So.-Brooklyn Park, MN/Champlin Park) to load the bases. The decision backfired on St. Thomas as **Jill Janke** (Fr.-Black River Falls) slugged a grand slam to give the Blugolds a 4-3 lead.

The Tommies went back on top in the next half inning with a pair of runs and then tacked two more on in the fifth for a 7-4 lead. The score stayed the same until the final inning, when the Blugolds mounted a four-run rally for the win. **Laura Brackey** (Jr.-Oakdale, MN/Tartan) led the inning off with a single and **Megan Oster** (Fr.-Eau Claire/Immanuel Lutheran) followed with a single of her own to put runners on first and second with nobody out. Leisgang singled to load the bases and a run scored when Paulus reached on an error. McKinney followed with a two-run double to tie the game at seven, leaving runners on second and third with just one out. Janke came to the plate looking to put the ball in play and she did with a ground ball to the pitcher. The pitcher fired to first for the out and Paulus took off for home with the throw. The catcher dropped the throw home and Paulus crossed the plate for the dramatic win.

McKinney pitched the first four innings of the contest, giving up five runs but only one earned run. **Molly Johnson** (Jr.-Wisconsin Rapids/Lincoln) pitched the last three innings in relief for the win, allowing two runs on three hits while striking out four and walking one. The Blugolds scored eight runs on six hits and four errors in the while the Tommies finished with seven runs on six hits and two errors.

Each team mustered only three hits in the nightcap but St. Thomas slugged a three-run home run in the bottom of the second and never looked back. **Andrea Neuville** (Jr.-Green Bay/West) would settle down after allowing the blast and faced just one batter over the minimum through the next four innings.

Eau Claire scored runs in the second and seventh innings, each courtesy of RBI singles by **Steph Salter** (So.-Schofield/D.C. Everest). Salter finished the game 2-for-3 with a pair of RBIs. Neuville took the loss for the Blugolds, finishing the game with six innings pitched and three hits allowed.

The Blugolds will be back in action tomorrow in the final day of the invitational. The Blugolds will battle Buena Vista in a doubleheader tomorrow, with the first game beginning at 9:00 a.m.

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