

Blugolds Played Host To Men & Women Champs In 04-05

Posted: Saturday, March 19, 2005

EAU CLAIRE - With the completion of the NCAA Division III men's and women's championship basketball games today, both the Blugold men and women can say they have hosted the best in the country.

The Eau Claire women nearly defeated national champion Millikin (IL) on January 5 while the men took on two-time national champ UW-Stevens Point twice this past season.

Millikin earned its first ever national championship in any sport with a 70-50 win over Randolph-Macon (VA) today in Norfolk, Virginia. The Blugold women had the Big Blue on the ropes at Zorn Arena on January 5, erasing an early 15-point deficit and grabbing a lead in the second half. Millikin showed why it would go on to be the national champions, using an 11-1 run late in the game to steal away the victory.

Eau Claire proved to be one of Millikin's toughest challenges on the season as the Big Blue lost just two games all season. The 20-point blowout in the championship game hints that the tougher competition came in regional action before the Final Four.

On its way to the national crown, Millikin undid UW-Stout 59-56 in the first game of sectional competition. The Blugolds went 1-2 against Stout this season, including a heart-breaking 70-65 overtime loss in the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Tournament. Eau Claire topped the Blue Devils 55-47 at home on February 12.

The Blugold men also faced the best-of-the-best this season, as UW-Stevens Point pounded the University of Rochester (NY) 73-49 in today's championship game in Salem. Neither of Eau Claire's contests against the Pointers was exceptionally close, though the Blugolds did take a 31-31 tie into halftime on December 4 at Zorn Arena. Stevens Point, who went on to become just one of three schools in history to win back-to-back championships, outscored the Blugolds 40-19 in the second half for a decisive victory. The Pointers also won handily in the other meeting against Eau Claire, earning an 83-55 win on February 5.

Like the women's tourney, the Stevens Point men had tougher challenges against more local opponents. Other than a 61-55 victory over Trinity (TX) in the NCAA Quarterfinals, the Pointers closest game since January 22 was a 10-point win over UW-Whitewater in the WIAC Tournament Championship game.

With the conclusion of the 2004-05 men's and women's seasons today, it is again safe to say that the Blugolds continue to play against the best competition in Division III. Both the men and the women look forward to another year of excellent basketball beginning next season.

- DN -