

# WIAC Co-Champion Ends Volleyball's Season In Heartbreaker

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OSHKOSH - The second-seeded UW-Eau Claire volleyball team could not advance past the Sweet 16 in the NCAA Division III National Tournament as it lost in five games to fourth-seeded Midwest Regional opponent UW-Whitewater with scores of 30-18, 28-30, 35-33, 26-30, and 14-16. The Midwest Regional action took place at the Kolf Sports Center in Oshkosh.

Eau Claire dominated in game one. Eau Claire went on a 16-3 run with a 7-5 lead to go up 23-8. Despite a late five-point Warhawk rally, the Blugolds won handedly. The team hit .438 with 17 kills and three errors. The opponents hit .057 while having 10 kills and eight errors.

Both teams kept near each other the entire second game. There were multiple ties and no team was more than three points ahead of the other until the end. At 25 all, Whitewater put up four successive points to go up 29-25. Eau Claire then pulled within one, but the Warhawks got the final point before Eau Claire could catch them to secure a victory. The .105 game saw 16 kills and 12 errors. The Warhawks hit .194, had 14 kills and made seven errors.

Down 6-5 in the third game, Whitewater scored six of the next seven to go up 11-7. Five consecutive points brought Eau Claire back on top 12-11. Neither team went up by more than three until the Warhawks went to game point at 29-26. Fighting from the brink, the Blugolds put together four points to go up 30-29. Whitewater then put up two points to go up 31-30. The two teams swapped a couple of points for a 33-32 Whitewater edge. Eau Claire then capped off the game three comeback with three straight points for a dramatic 35-33 win. The Blugolds hit .286 with 21 kills and five errors compared to the Warhawk totals of .175, 19, and nine.

The early going in game four saw the Warhawks with a slight lead of around three points. The teams swapped leads multiple times in the game. After going up 22-19, the Warhawks maintained a two to three point cushion for the rest of the game before winning by four and forcing a fifth decisive game. The .171 Blugolds had 11 kills and five errors. With 18 kills and eight errors, the opponents hit .213.

The Blugolds jumped to a couple early game five leads. The Warhawks then went up 7-6, 9-7, and then opened up a bit of an edge with a 12-8 score. Four straight Blugold points tied it up at 12-12. The game then saw ties of 13-13 and 14-14. However, the opponents then scored two more points to give them a 16-14 win to clinch the match and move on to the Elite Eight. The Blugolds had a .160 hitting percentage, nine kills and five errors in the last game. Whitewater hit .214, made nine kills and three errors.

**Molly Menard** (Sr.-Eau Claire/Memorial) led with 24 kills. **Jenny Wolter** (Sr.-Osceola) had 17. **Carly Freiborg** (Jr.-Sacred Heart, MN/Renville County West) and her 56 assists were the most for the team. The Blugolds hit .237 as a team with 74 total kills. Whitewater posted amounts of .172 and 70.

Freiborg also had the most digs with 25. **Shanna Berger** (Jr.-Baldwin/Baldwin-Woodville) had 20 digs of her own. **Jessica Groh** (Jr.-Eau Claire/North) was the leader in blocks with eight. The 14.0 block effort also came with 93 digs. Whitewater had 15.5 blocks on the day while making 75 digs.

Whitewater faces Emory University in the quarterfinal round Thursday in Salem, VA.

The team concludes the season 30-5. It is the most victories since the 32 of 1997-98. The five losses are tied for second fewest in a season and the least since the five of 1988-89. This was Eau Claire's eighth national tournament appearance and fifth time it has been ousted in the Sweet 16.

Sweet 16 Results

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