

# Men's Basketball To Tip-Off Regular Season this Weekend

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EAU CLAIRE - The UW-Eau Claire men's basketball team will begin its season this weekend when they play host to Coe College on Friday night and Buena Vista on Saturday night in the Wisconsin-Iowa Challenge.

The Blugolds, who went 13-13 last season, will go into the season with a young team. The Blugolds have only one senior and two juniors on the roster. The 13 underclassmen for the Blugolds will be asked to step up right away for Coach Terry Gibbons.

**Tyler Birkel** (*Sr.-Spring Valley*) is the lone Blugold senior and will be asked to provide inside presence and leadership. Birkel has been the Blugolds' leading shot blocker the past three seasons. **Dan Beyer** (*So.-Waukesha/Catholic Memorial*) returns after missing the majority of the 2004-05 season due to injury. Beyer should add versatility to the Blugold offense.

The Blugolds opponent on Friday, Coe College, will debut a new head coach. Patrick Juckem previously was an associate head coach at Lawrence University, where he helped lead the Vikings to a 62-17 record and back-to-back Midwest Conference titles and conference tournament titles.

Saturday the Blugolds will face Buena Vista College. The Beavers also come into the season with an inexperienced team. Gone from last season's 26-4 team are the top six scorers, including all five starters. The Beavers are guided by head coach Brian Van Haaften. Van Haaften has the highest career winning percentage of any active coach in Division III basketball.

Saturday night's game will also be Youth Night. Two students through 12th grade will be admitted free with one paid adult. The first 200 kids will get a free Blugolds basketball team poster. Kids will be allowed on the court before the game to high-five the Blugolds as they enter. At halftime, 24 autographed basketballs will be given away. An autograph session will also be held after the game.

The action tips-off at 7 p.m. Friday in Zorn Arena when the Blugolds face Coe College. The Buena Vista game Saturday night is also slated for a 7 p.m. start in Zorn Arena.

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