

# Blugold Women Win Thanksgiving Showcase

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EAU CLAIRE - Playing an aggressive defensive game and up-tempo offensive game, the UW-Eau Claire women's basketball team upended previously unbeaten Luther College, 64-59, to claim the championship of the 14th annual Eau Claire Thanksgiving Showcase at Zorn Arena Saturday night.

After falling behind 11-4 in the first four minutes of the contest, the Blugolds came back to tie the game at 11 and 13 before Luther opened its largest lead of the night at 24-15 with 6:30 to go in the half. The Blugolds cut the deficit to one just prior to halftime and trailed by 32-29 at the intermission.

It took just two minutes for the Blugolds to claim the lead for good (35-34) in the second half but the game was far from over. The Blugolds built up a 44-36 advantage at the 13:08 mark and then punched back and forth with the Norse who would cut the deficit to four, then two, then four, then one with the Blugolds always responding. After Luther pulled within one at 54-53, the Blugolds got six straight points to move ahead, 60-53 with 2:21 remaining. Neither team scored until the 45-second mark when Luther made a free throw. A two-point basket by Erica Svien brought it to 60-56 with 20 seconds left. Then senior **Liz Van Drasek** (*Albertville, MN/St. Michael-Albertville*) hit a jumper to make it 62-56 with eight seconds to go. Melissa O'Brien countered with a trey with three seconds remaining to make it 62-59. But tournament MVP **Michelle Burns** (*So.-Eau Claire/North*) iced the win with a pair of free throws with two seconds to go.

The Blugolds forced 27 Luther turnovers with their defensive scrappiness while coughing up the ball just 16 times themselves.

Luther stayed close by commanding the boards to the tune of 37-27 and hitting 5 of 18 shots from beyond the arc while the Blugolds failed to connect on any of six three-point attempts.

The Blugolds got great balanced scoring from their starting unit as Burns tallied 12 with seven rebounds and three steals. **Rachel Becker** (*Sr.-Gilmanton*) earned a spot on the All-Tournament team with an 11-point, seven-rebound, five-assist performance. Sophomore transfer **Rachel Mueggenborg** (*West Salem*) and Van Drasek each contributed eight points while sophomore guard Amanda Zenner (*Medford*) rounded out the starting five with six points, four assists and four rebounds.

Freshman **Brittanni Hakanson** (*Boyceville*) came off the bench to match Burns for team scoring honors with 12 and freshman **Heidi Arciszewski** (*Thorp*) chipped in with six points.

Christina Gaard led four Luther players in double figures with 13. The Norse were represented on the All-Tournament team by Anne Straate who scored 10 in the title game and Erica Svien who tallied six.

Gustavus Adolphus won the third place game with a 73-60 triumph over St. Scholastica. Gustavus was led by Brin Monahan with 27 while Jen Kne scored 24 for St. Scholastica. Both players were selected to the All-Tournament team.

The back-to-back tournament wins boosted the Blugolds back above the .500 level at 3-2 while Luther absorbed its first setback in four starts. The Blugolds are now 3-0 all-time against Luther and won the Thanksgiving Showcase for the 13th time.

The Blugolds open Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference play on the road Wednesday against defending conference champion and preseason favorite UW-Stout at Menomonie.

Eau Claire-Luther College Box Score

2005 Thanksgiving Showcase Webpage

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