

Men's Basketball Use Balance In Win Over St. Mary's

Posted: Thursday, December 29, 2005

EAU CLAIRE - With five players posting double-digit points, the UW-Eau Claire men's basketball team advanced to the 37th Annual UW-Eau Claire Holiday Classic championship game with a 76-66 victory over St. Mary's (MN) here tonight at W.L. Zorn Arena.

The victory was the fourth in a row for the Blugolds, who will advance to meet Finlandia (MI) in tomorrow night. Finlandia defeated Northland College 71-54 in the first game of the evening. Tyler Lloyd led the Lions with 30 points while Ryan Artley added 17 points in the win.

The Blugolds and Lions have already faced each other once this year with Eau Claire winning 98-70 in Zorn Arena.

The Blugolds scored the first seven points of the game and raced out to a 19-6 lead with 14:04 remaining in the first half. The Cardinals would counter with an 18-6 run to cut the lead to 25-22 with 5:24 left before half time. Both teams traded baskets for the most part over the remainder of the half until **Jared Bardon** (So.-DeForest) made a jumper as time expired to give the Blugolds a 39-31 lead.

The Blugolds started the second half much like they did the first half opening with a 7-0 run to push the lead to 46-31. After the Cardinals cut the lead to 49-42 the Blugolds went on a 12-2 run to give them their largest lead of the game at 61-44 with 11:08 left to play.

The Blugolds maintained a double-digit lead until a Cardinal score cut the lead to 68-59 with 4:12 to play but could get no closer than 70-62 with 2:31 to play as the Blugolds went on to victory.

The Blugolds shot 48.1% from the floor and 50% from behind the three-point line making 12-of-24 shots. St. Mary's shot 38.5% from the floor and 26.9% behind the arc but outshot the Blugolds 65-52 due on large part to grabbing 24 offensive rebounds.

Zack Ryan (So.-Lake Elmo, MN/Tartan) led all scorers with 19 points while also collecting five assists and four rebounds. Bardon and **Dan Ottney** (So.-Glenwood City) scored 10 points while **Luke Meier** (So.-Cross Plains/Middleton) and **Tyler Birkel** (Sr.-Spring Valley) also scored 10 points off the bench. Meier came in and shot 2-for-2 from long range while Birkel led the Blugolds with six rebounds, four coming on the offensive end.

The Blugolds and Lions are set to tip-off at approximately 8:00 p.m. tomorrow night in Zorn Arena. The consolation championship between Northland and St. Mary's will begin at 6:00 p.m.

Eau Claire-St. Mary's Box Score