

SIUE women's basketball team announces challenging 2016-2017 schedule

August 15 2016 2:45 AM



EDWARDSVILLE – SIUE women's basketball Head Coach [Paula Buscher](#) announced a challenging 2016-17 schedule Monday with the Cougars heading to two tournaments before diving into the [Ohio Valley Conference](#) slate.

"During the preseason, I want us to get challenged in every single facet of the game," said Buscher. "I think we're going to be challenged physically and there is the mental toughness piece of playing back-to-back games. We're going to have to be resilient."

"It's probably the toughest schedule we've had as far as the quality of teams since I've been here at SIUE," she added.

SIUE, coming off an 18-win season a year ago, will play in a tournament at Air Force Dec. 2-3 against Utah Valley and either Air Force and Vanderbilt. On Dec. 19-20, the Cougars travel to Stetson in DeLand, Florida, to face off against Bethune-Cookman and host Stetson.

"I think the two tournaments will be good for us," said Buscher. "Any time you play back-to-back games early in the season, it's a challenge. That experience is going to help you down the road in the conference tournament."

The home schedule includes 13 games beginning with an exhibition contest Nov. 6 against Lindenwood. The regular season home opener is Nov. 23 against sister school SIU Carbondale, which won 20 games last season. SIUE also has home nonconference games with Western Illinois (Nov. 27), Missouri-St. Louis (Dec. 11) and Illinois State (Dec. 23).

Buscher also plans to give her team some major road tests with games at South Dakota (Nov. 11), South Dakota State (Nov. 13), Saint Louis (Nov. 17), Missouri (Dec. 7) and Northern Illinois (Dec. 16).

South Dakota was the Women's National Invitational Tournament champion in 2016. South Dakota State advanced to the second round of the NCAA Tournament last season and was ousted by fourth-seeded Stanford by one point.

"I expect both of these games will be played in packed houses," said Buscher. "It will be an exciting road environment for our players."

Saint Louis was an automatic qualifier for the WNIT after advancing to the title game of the Atlantic 10 Conference Tournament. Missouri advanced to the second round of the NCAA Tournament last season before falling to No. 2 seed Texas. Northern Illinois is coming off an 11-win season.

The OVC season kicks off on New Year's Eve with a home contest against Tennessee Tech.

The rest of the home OVC schedule includes Murray State (Jan. 14), Southeast Missouri (Jan. 18), Tennessee State (Jan. 25), Jacksonville State (Feb. 4), UT Martin (Feb. 11), Austin Peay (Feb. 15) and Eastern Illinois (Feb. 25). Four of the last six games during the regular season will be at the Vadalabene Center.

The OVC schedule on the road begins Jan. 5 at Eastern Kentucky. The rest of the road OVC schedule includes Morehead State (Jan. 7), Austin Peay (Jan. 11), UT Martin (Jan. 21), Eastern Illinois (Jan. 28), defending OVC Tournament champion Belmont (Feb. 1), Southeast Missouri (Feb. 8), and Murray State (Feb. 18).

The OVC Championship is set for March 1-4 at Municipal Auditorium in Nashville, Tennessee. The league championship features the top eight teams in the OVC standings battling for a spot in the 64-team field of the NCAA Tournament.