

Cougars add three in early signing period

by Eric Hess

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EDWARDSVILLE, Ill. – SIUE women's basketball Head Coach [Paula Buscher](#) announced that three players have signed National Letters of Intent to compete for the Cougars next season.

SIUE, which won 18 games last season and advanced to the semifinals of the [Ohio Valley Conference](#) Tournament, added Allie Troeckler (Bethalto, Illinois), Zaria Whitlock (Oakdale, Minn.) and Christen King (Medina, Tennessee).

"Our future looks bright with the signing of these three high-quality student-athletes," said Buscher. "These three are athletic, well-coached competitors and well-rounded individuals."

Troeckler, a 5-foot, 10-inch guard/forward, averaged 22.5 points, 8.2 rebounds, 2.9 steals, 2.7 blocks and 2.1 assists per game last season for Civic Memorial High School.

"Allie is a high-scoring guard who will go well over 2,000 points in her high school career," said Buscher. "She has the ability to score, but what makes her a great player is that she is a true competitor and plays all out all the time. Allie is a high character person both on and off the court."

Troeckler is a two-time All-State honoree with second team honors as a junior and first team honors as a sophomore. She was named the Most Valuable Player at the Jerseyville Christmas Classic and All-Tournament at the Salem Thanksgiving Classic last season. She set a school record with 44 points during the 2014-15 season against Taylorville. As a freshman, she helped Civic Memorial to a 33-3 record and a quarterfinal appearance at the state championships.

"Allie is special talent because of the way she goes about her business day in and day out with a warrior-like mentality," said Civic Memorial Coach Jonathan Denney. "She is a fierce competitor who loves the game with every ounce of her soul. As much as she means to our team and program on the floor, she exemplifies the total package off the floor as a student-athlete. She is a great ambassador for the CM girls' basketball program and a true role model for her teammates and youngsters in the lower levels and feeder system. She goes about everything the right way."

Whitlock, a 6-0 guard, was the Most Valuable Player last season at Tartan High School. She averaged 10 points, six rebounds, four assists and five steals per contest.

"Zaria is a long guard who has the ability to be a lockdown defender," said Buscher. "She leads her team in all sorts of categories but what makes her special is the pressure she puts on opponents with her defense. She is an excellent student and a very selfless type of person. We are fortunate to have her join our program."

A member of the Minnesota All-State Academic team, she also earned first team Metro East All-Conference honors.

"Zaria is a tireless worker on both ends of the court," said Tartan High School Coach Tim Obr. "She is a lock-down defender as well as a player with multiple skills on the offensive end of the court. Not only is she a leader on the court, but she is a great leader off the court."

King, a 5-9 guard, averaged 13 points, eight rebounds, four assists and two blocks per game last season at South Gibson County High School.

"Christen is a quick, long guard who will be fun to watch in the open court," said Buscher. "She can really put pressure on the defense with her quickness and ability to get to the rim. She is a student of the game and is always working on improving her game."

A first team All-Conference selection last season, she holds school record for single-season assists (120), single-season steals (78) and career assists (201).

"Christen has made a tremendous impact on our program," said South Gibson County High School Coach Carla Wyatt. "She is a great athlete, but what makes her special is her desire to improve as a basketball player. Some comes to practice every day looking for a way to get better."

Buscher said she has added three strong, athletic players for the team's perimeter game.

"What I really like about these three is not just what they will bring to the court but what kind of people they are off the court," she said. "They are good students and the high-character, high-quality type people who will be great additions to our Cougar family."