

# Murray State tops SIUE men's basketball team 84-73

by Joe Pott

February 16 2017 10:45 PM



MURRAY, Ky. – Murray State used a hot-shooting second half to defeat SIUE 84-73 Thursday in [Ohio Valley Conference](#) basketball at the CFSB Center.

The Cougars dropped to 0-14 in OVC play and 5-23 overall. Murray State improved to 14-13 overall and 8-5 in OVC play.

The Cougars finished the first half by outscoring the Racers 14-6 over the final 5:06 of the period and trailed 38-35 at the break.

"It was just that, it was energy," SIUE Head Coach [Jon Harris](#) said of the Cougars' surge. "It wasn't anything special, the guys played hard. We made some plays, dove on the floor a couple different times. We grabbed some key rebounds. We played with a little more effort to close the half."

Jonathan Stark opened the second half with a jumper to extend the Racers' lead to five before [Josh White](#) answered for SIUE with a three-pointer 20 seconds later to allow SIUE to close within two at 40-38 when Murray State went on a 12-0 run to lead 52-38 with 15:40 to play in the game.

"We lost them a couple of times and gave up some baskets in transition," Harris said. "They got some key 50-50 balls. When you're struggling like we are, those are the plays that you have to make. We have to find a way to get some of those balls to go our way and I think the score may tip in our favor."

The Racers never looked back, building their lead to as many as 20 points. Murray State connected on 57.1 percent (16-28) of its shots in the second half, including knocking down 5 of 8 three-point attempts.

Stark, the OVC scoring leader, led the Racers with a game-high 27 points. He was 9-16 from the field and 6-7 from three-point range. Terrell Miller added a double-double of 18 points and 13 rebounds. Damarcus Croaker scored 16 points.

[Devin Thornton](#) and [Burak Eslik](#) each scored 19 points to lead four Cougars in double figures. Thornton's 19 points nearly doubled his previous career high. He was 7-10 from the field and tied a career high with three three-pointers.

"I'm really happy for Devin," Harris said. "Devin has earned that. Going back to last year he is one guy that brings it every day. He has a positive attitude every day. He makes the hustle plays every day. For him to get an opportunity to go out there and do what he did tonight is pretty special."

Eslik was 4-14 from the field and 9-10 from the free throw line. He has now hit 134 free throws for the season, breaking his own school record of 131 set last season.

[Josh White](#) and [Brandon Jackson](#) each scored 10 points. [Christian Ellis](#) added eight points and six assists. He is averaging six assists a game over his last three games.

The Cougars complete their final road trip of the year with a 6:30 p.m. Saturday game at Austin Peay.

"Obviously we dropped a close one at our place," Harris added. "We're going to have our hands full at Austin Peay."