



# SIUE notches No. 3 seed in Ohio Valley Conference Women's Basketball Tourney

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EDWARDSVILLE, Ill. - The SIUE women's basketball team did what it needed to do Saturday afternoon at the Vadalabene Center.

The Cougars defeated Eastern Illinois 68-52 in the [Ohio Valley Conference](#) regular-season finale for both teams and secured the No. 3 seed in the upcoming league tourney.

SIUE, 13-16 overall and 9-7 in the OVC, will play at 3 p.m. Thursday against the sixth seeded Tennessee Tech in an opening-round tournament game at Municipal Auditorium in Nashville, Tennessee. Belmont is seeded first and Morehead State second in the eight-team event.

"I'm really excited about the win and proud of our kids," SIUE Head Coach [Paula Buscher](#) said after the Cougars swept the EIU Panthers. "Now, we need to be loose, be focused, play hard and enjoy the moment going into the tournament."

[Donshel Beck](#) scored 20 points and grabbed eight rebounds, while [Nakiah Bell](#) pitched in with 13 points, six rebounds and three assists to spur the Cougars, who won eight of their final 11 conference games.

[Sydney Bauman](#) collected eight points and nine rebounds to complement them. The Cougars led 31-18 at half and never looked back.

"Coach really emphasized how much we needed to win this game," Beck said. "We got it done and took care of business."

No fewer than 10 Cougars scored in the game, but the most memorable two points came from [Cassidy Sherman](#), the lone SIUE senior. She made a pair of free throws with 2:20 remaining for her first points of the season.

"I'm excited, and the whole team was excited I got them," said Sherman, who was recognized before the game. Buscher gave the 5-foot, 9-inch Sherman, a standout midfielder on the conference championship soccer squad, her first start of the season.

Sherman added, "It was awesome to see everybody supporting me. I talked to Coach Buscher this summer about coming out for basketball, and I'm happy I did. The basketball season is a lot longer than the soccer season. It's a long grind and so intense."

Buscher said Sherman has been a welcome addition to the Cougars and an inspiration for her teammates.

"She's a tremendous individual and a low-maintenance player," Buscher stressed. "She battles every day in practice, and she won't back down to anybody."

SIUE, which defeated EIU for the seventh straight time, made 23 of 58 shots, including 4 of 10 from 3-point land, and converted 18 of 25 free throws Saturday. The Cougars outrebounded the Panthers 48-36.

Zharia Lenoir (12 points) and senior Erica Brown (11 points) led EIU, which finished 9-19 and 5-11.

Beck figures the Cougars are playing their best basketball of the season at the right time and hopes it continues next week in the four-day OVC tourney that starts Wednesday.

"In the beginning of the season, we were just finding ourselves and not playing good defense," Beck said. "But we have been playing better lately and it all comes down to defensive stops. Everybody on the team is doing what they can do to help us win."

Buscher said, "Our team is resilient, and we are playing with more consistency. They trust each other more."

Sherman saw the SIUE soccer team put it all together to claim a conference tourney title in 2014. She said the basketball Cougars can take a similar mindset going into their tourney. The winner automatically qualifies for the NCAA Tournament.

"Anything can happen in the conference tournament," Sherman said. "We just need to play with confidence and play good defense."

Buscher pointed out, "If you look at what has happened in the conference this season, anything can happen."

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The field for the 2017 [Ohio Valley Conference](#) Women's Basketball Championship Presented by VisitMyrtleBeach.com has been set after the final day of the regular season.

Belmont finished the regular-season undefeated in Conference play to earn the top seed while Morehead State is the No. 2 seed. SIUE is the third seed while UT Martin earned the No. 4 seed. Austin Peay rounds out the top five followed by Tennessee Tech, Eastern Kentucky, Southeast Missouri.

**2017 [Ohio Valley Conference](#) Women's Basketball Championship Presented by VisitMyrtleBeach.com (Municipal Auditorium - Nashville, Tenn.)**

**FIRST ROUND – Wednesday, March 1**

Game 1 - #1 Belmont vs. #8 Southeast Missouri - 1 p.m. (OVCDN/ESPN3)

Game 2 - #2 Morehead State vs. #7 Eastern Kentucky – 3 p.m. (OVCDN/ESPN3)

**FIRST ROUND - Thursday, March 2**

Game 3 - #4 UT Martin vs. #5 Austin Peay – 1 p.m. (OVCDN/ESPN3)

Game 4 - #3 SIUE vs. #6 Tennessee Tech – 3 p.m. (OVCDN/ESPN3)

**SEMIFINALS – Friday, March 3**

Game 5 – Game 1 winner vs. Game 3 winner – 12 p.m. (OVCDN/ESPN3)

Game 6 – Game 2 winner vs. Game 4 winner – 2 p.m. (OVCDN/ESPN3)

**CHAMPIONSHIP - Saturday, March 4**

Game 7 – Game 5 winner vs. Game 6 winner – 2 p.m. (OVCDN/ESPN3)