

SIUE volleyball team extends win streak to seven games with win over Jacksonville State

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EDWARDSVILLE – SIUE volleyball extended its winning streak to seven matches Friday with a four-set victory over Jacksonville State at the Vadalabene Center.

The Cougars, now 17-4 overall and 7-2 in the Ohio Valley Conference, bested the Gamecocks 26-24, 25-20, 25-27, 25-12.

"We were swinging to win but that unfortunately led to more errors than usual," said Acting Head Coach Kendall Paulus. "We hit .205 for the match, but there were definitely highs and lows."

Friday's match was all about momentum.

Jacksonville State, 18-10 overall and 4-5 in the OVC, marched out to a 20-13 lead off the serve of Rachel Perucki in the first set.

The Cougars, however, outscored Jacksonville State 13-4 over the rest of the set, including two service aces from Taylor Joens after a JSU timeout. Joens would finish the match with a career-high six service aces.

Samantha Knight's kill on set point put the Cougars up a set. SIUE had 18 kills in the opening set coupled with 10 attack errors.

"We've been in that situation several times," said Paulus of the first-set comeback. "We talk about experiences we can put in the bank and so when our backs are against the wall, we know we've done it before."

The momentum carried SIUE to a second set victory with five kills in the set by Jackie Scott. Three straight attack errors by Jacksonville State on Katie Shashack's serve gave SIUE a cushion at the end.

Jacksonville State rallied in set three by going ahead by as many as 10 points at 15-5. After watching the Cougars come back from seven points down in the opening set, SIUE fans watched the Cougars rally again, tying the set 24-24 and 25-25 before Allyson Zuhlke's kill won the set for the Gamecocks at 27-25.

Zuhlke led JSU with 14 kills.

After nearly pulling off another comeback, set four was all SIUE. The Cougars hit .375 during the set with four kills from Ashley Witt. The Cougars also picked up key blocks from Dylann Otte and Annie Ellis.

Joens led SIUE's offense with 15 kills followed by 10 from Scott.

"Taylor had a nice match," said Paulus. "We were able to stick to our system and stay balance, but it was a little tricky."

SIUE continues homecourt OVC play Saturday with a 2 p.m. match against Tennessee Tech.