

SIUE surges, but doesn't overtake Belmont

January 11 2018 3:24 PM



EDWARDSVILLE, Ill. – SIUE made a surge at two-time Ohio Valley Conference tournament champion Belmont in the second half Wednesday night at the Vadalabene Center, but the Cougars couldn't overtake the Bruins.

Belmont used plenty of long-range shooting to defeat SIUE 72-55 in an early-season showdown OVC women's basketball game. The Bruins improved to 14-3 overall and 5-0 in the conference.

SIUE, seeing its four-game winning streak snapped in its league home opener, fell to 7-9 and 4-1.

"In the third quarter, we came out like the team we wanted to be," said SIUE Head Coach Paula Buscher, pointing to a Cougars' charge. SIUE trimmed a 20-point first-half deficit (37-17) to seven points (45-38) late in the third quarter. Then Belmont got its three-point shooting game going again and junior guard Darby Maggard, who scored a game-high 24 points, ignited the Bruins. Belmont hit 12 three-pointers for the game.

"The biggest thing we take from this game is what team do we want to be – the one that came out in the first two quarters or the one that came out in the third quarter?" said Buscher. "We were soft coming out, then we became more confident and aggressive in the third. You have to play aggressively for 40 minutes against a good team like Belmont."

Donshel Beck stirred the Cougars, especially in the second half. She scored a team-best 18 points and snared five rebounds. Lauren White punched in 11 points, collected five rebounds and handed out four assists. Teammate Gwen Adams supplied 10 points and five rebounds.

"We need to take the second half and put in the first half," Beck said about playing a complete game. "We had a lot of turnovers and didn't communicate well on offense in the first half."

The Cougars fell behind 12-0 before Adams scored with 4:03 remaining in the first quarter. They had to try and play catch-up the rest of the way.

"The tale of this game is we started it off," Buscher said. "I don't like how we started things. We had 13 turnovers in the first half."

Beck noted, "We came out soft, but we fought back in the second half. It was a good test for us because sometimes you need to see a team that will bring out your weaknesses so you can fix them."

Maggard's shooting comforted the Bruins whenever the Cougars made a run. The 5-foot, 5-inch guard made 7 of 11 shots, including 5 of 9 treys. She also converted all five of her free throws and contributed five assists and four rebounds.

"She's going to pull the trigger, and Maggard stepped up and hit some big three-pointers," Buscher said.

Overall, Belmont hit 24 of 61 shots. The Bruins also made all 12 of their free throws and outrebounded the Cougars 41-38. SIUE connected on 20 of 60 shots, with 3 of 12 coming from beyond the arc. The Cougars sank 12 of 16 foul shots.

Belmont surged ahead 37-19 at half, thanks to making 13 of 34 shots, including 6 of 18 treys. SIUE made only 8 of 26 shots, including 1 of 4 from three-point range, in the first half.

The Cougars continue this homestand Saturday to welcome Tennessee State in a 2 p.m. game.