

# **SIUE women post come-from-behind win over Southeast Missouri**

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**EDWARDSVILLE** – The SIUE Cougars finished with a flourish and celebrated a come-from-behind win Wednesday night at the Vadalabene Center.

They used some late lightning to strike down Southeast Missouri 65-57 in an Ohio Valley Conference women's basketball. SIUE improved to 9-9 overall and 6-1 in the OVC. SEMO dropped to 8-11 and 3-4.

"What I was most pleased with was the way we closed out the game," SIUE Head Coach Paula Buscher said. "We challenged our players a little bit, and they stepped up for us."

The Cougars used a 16-1 spree in the final five minutes to overturn a 54-48 deficit and gain a 64-55 advantage before settling for their nine-point win. Donshel Beck tallied a game-best 20 points and moved to 11th on the SIUE all-time scoring list with 1,237 points.

Lauren White chipped in with 13 points, and freshman Zaria Whitlock added 11 points, all in the second half. Sydney Bauman contributed 10 points, while Beck logged six assists.

"We knew it was going to be a tough game, and we always need high energy to beat them," Beck said. "We started making more shots and playing better defense in the second half."

SIUE, trailing 26-23 at half, tied the game four times in the third quarter – the last one at 38-38. SEMO carried a 46-41 advantage into the fourth quarter and led 54-48 with 5:15 remaining.

That's when the Cougars went to work.

Whitlock and Beck combined for six points to get within 54-53 of the Redhawks. After SEMO free throws, SIUE's Jay'Nee Alston connected on a three-pointer from the top of the key to shoot the Cougars in front 56-55 with 3:05 to go.

The Cougars never lost the lead down the stretch. Whitlock's three-point play widened the Cougars' lead to 59-55, and they tacked on five more points before the Redhawks scored their final basket.

"We scored a little more in the second half and our defense was stronger," Buscher said. "Zaria came up big defensively and with her scoring. She played with a lot of confidence in the second half."

Whitlock said, "I'm definitely getting more comfortable with the help of my teammates. It's good for your confidence when the older girls are telling you what you need to do."

Beck thoroughly enjoyed the way the Cougars surged in the closing minutes.

"Lots of times this season, we wouldn't finish a game like that, but tonight we finished it the right way," she said.

Buscher said when the Cougars need a clutch play they can depend upon Beck.

"Donnie is always there for us in crunch time," Buscher said. "She's becoming more of a student of the game. She's a great player for us and in the league."

SIUE made 20 of 58 shots, or 35 percent, and hit 5 of 18 from three-point range. The Cougars converted 20 of 28 free throws and outrebounded SEMO 40-37. The Redhawks sank 21 of 59 shots, going 2 of 14 on 3-pointers. They made 13 of 16 free throws.

Tesia Thompson led the Redhawks off the bench with 16 points.

"What's important is you have to find ways to win games because most of these conference games are going to go down to the last three or four minutes," Buscher said. "Sometimes you have to work your way through things, and we did that."

The Cougars conclude their four-game homestand Saturday when they welcome UT Martin at 6 p.m. SIUE then has two road games before returning home for another four-game home swing starting Thursday, Feb. 1, against Tennessee Tech.