

SIUE women shoot season's best in road victory over Tennessee State

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. – SIUE shot a season-best 54.7 percent from the field, including its last eight field goals of the game, Thursday as it earned a road victory 88-76 at Tennessee State.

A crowd of 3,137 made up mostly of grade school students for an 11 a.m. start at the Gentry Center saw the Cougars, 11-9 overall and 8-1 in the Ohio Valley Conference, win their fourth straight game.

SIUE Head Coach Paula Buscher now has 299 career victories and will go for No. 300 Saturday at 3 p.m. when the Cougars take on Belmont in a 3 p.m. contest at the Curb Event Center.

The Cougars scored a season-high 88 points Thursday with 18 from Donshel Beck, 17 from Lauren White and a career-best 16 from Jay'Nee Alston that included four-three-pointers. SIUE shot 35 of 64 from the field, including 18-25 in the second half (72 percent).

"I thought Elina Berzina came in and knocked down some huge shots," added Buscher. Berzina and Allie Troeckler added nine points each. Gwen Adams scored eight while Zaria Whitlock notched six.

SIUE was dominant in a number of areas, including points in the paint (50-28), second-chance points (21-11) as well as rebounds (44-30). Sydney Bauman, who had five points, also added a career-best six blocks.

Beck led the Cougars with 13 rebounds, recording her fourth double-double of the season.

"They've been getting on me about that," said Beck. "They told me to just go in and rebound because that's what helps my offense and my defense."

The Cougars led by just two points (41-39) at halftime. Tia Wooten scored 16 of her game-high 29 points in the first half for the Tigers, which fell to 3-15 overall and 1-8 in the OVC.

"Our defense was not spectacular, but I'm going to credit Tennessee State," said Buscher. "They just keep coming at you."

"We weren't really playing our game (in the first half) so coming back out we wanted to play with energy," said White. "Just getting us going was my goal today."

White scored 15 points in the second half on 7-of-10 shooting over the final 20 minutes.

SIUE grabbed its first double-digit lead with 7:20 to play in the third quarter on a layup by Zaria Whitlock. The Cougars were out of their comfort zone for much of the game with a loud opposing crowd working to keep Tennessee State in the game.

"It was noisy in the gym so we really had to work on our communication not only on the court but with the coaches," added White.

Buscher said she was pleased with the overall play after the Cougars shot 9 of 12 from the field in the final period to pull away from the Tigers.

"We did a better job with being patient with the ball but not being passive," she added.