

Edwardsville grad Julian Harvey closes career as second-team All-American, is SIUE's most decorated athlete

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EDWARDSVILLE - Julian Harvey's journey carried him along a successful trail that made the recent SIUE graduate the most decorated athlete in the university's growing NCAA Division I history.

It started in Edwardsville and ended in Edwardsville. Harvey, a 5-foot, 10-inch, 180-pound track and field standout, is proud of that.

No wonder. Harvey is the Cougars' first six-time NCAA Division I All-America athlete, thanks to his prowess in the high jump, long jump and triple jump. He went from good at Edwardsville High to great at SIUE, so Harvey didn't have to leave town to raise the bar and elevate his efforts.

"When I graduated from high school, SIUE was the only college to give me a chance," Harvey said. "I wanted to make the most of it and wanted to start something new at SIUE. Things started happening for me."

By the time he finished his Cougar career this past spring, Harvey put some big numbers on the board. He owns SIUE records for the indoor high jump (7 feet, 3 inches), the outdoor high jump (7-1.5), the indoor triple jump (51-9), the outdoor triple jump (51-5.75) and the indoor long jump (26-9.75). He's second all-time in the outdoor long jump (25-11.5) behind La'Derrick Ward (26-3 in 2014).

And in February of 2017, Harvey posted the nation's best indoor mark in the long jump (26-9.75).

"I think the biggest thing for me when I was growing up is that I wasn't the fastest or strongest guy," Harvey said. "But I wanted to make a name for myself, and my mom and dad really encouraged me. I wanted to keep showing them what I could do and make them proud of me."

Self-motivation was never a problem.

"I've been an underdog for most of my life," Harvey said, relishing the role. "That's why I worked so hard. If you work hard, good things can happen."

SIUE assistant track coach Joey Pacione can attest to Harvey's work habits. He has guided him in the jumps and seen his growth.

"Nothing is done without purpose, and nothing is done as an accident," Pacione said. "That kind of work ethic has always been there with Julian, and he approaches everything wanting to be as perfect as possible. He is always trying to get the best out of himself."

"I have yet to see too many athletes match his work ethic and intensity effort."

Harvey's approach and his area ties make him an ambassador for SIUE track, Pacione said. The Cougars point to their poster guy as a way others can achieve success for the team in the Ohio Valley Conference and beyond.

He's the local guy who made more than good. He made great.

"Julian is such a boon for our ability to recruit. He developed into a national class athlete. His career shows local athletes that staying at SIUE is a great option," Pacione said, referring to the Cougars landing more area competitors.

Harvey closed his collegiate career this month by finishing 12th in this year's Division I outdoor long jump finals and claiming second-team All-America honors.

"There's so much pride that comes with it," Harvey said, reflecting on his SIUE accomplishments, particularly against track powers from the Big Ten or Southeastern Conference. "It's nice to look back now and see what happened. You look back and there were so many great times. It'll be a bunch of fun to go back and talk to kids about it. I know I wouldn't be where I am without Coach Pacione."

The four-time OVC long jump champion isn't ready to call it a career in track. There's more jumping to do and the dream of qualifying for the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo, Japan. He qualified for the Olympic Trials in 2016.

"It (2020 Games) is a goal, and I'll keep working at it because I want to do my best. Track has been my life for a while, and I've always enjoyed it. I'm going to take a step back now from it this summer," he said about some rest and relaxation, "but then I will ramp it up again."

SIUE gave Harvey, a psychology major with a minor in exercise sports psychology, that opportunity to make the most of himself and that's something he will always cherish.

"Some people joked about it that I stayed in town to go to college, but it was good for me," Harvey said. "It's not the name of the school, but who is behind it. And SIUE has only been Division I for a few years, but we wanted to show what we could do and it was great to be part of it. I want things to keep on going here, have more success and for SIUE to have more people like myself."

Pacione is all for that.

"Julian is never satisfied with where he's at and he doesn't know how to quit," Pacione said. "His power levels and strength are world class, and he has an underdog mentality that is rooted in not coasting by on his talent."

Sometimes the coach even learns something from his star student.

"The biggest thing Julian has taught me is not to put limits on somebody," Pacione said.
"He doesn't put them on himself."