

Jackson, Williford lead SIUE to win over Harris-Stowe of St. Louis

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EDWARDSVILLE – Brandon Jackson and Tyrese Williford led the way with career-scoring efforts as the SIUE Cougars outlasted Harris-Stowe of St. Louis, 92-87, Saturday afternoon at the Vadalabene Center.

Jackson, a junior from East St. Louis, Ill., poured in 28 points and snared 11 rebounds for his first career double-double. Williford, a junior guard from Chicago, contributed 25 points, nine rebounds and four assists. The Cougars improved to 2-5, in winning at home for the second time this season. Harris-Stowe, a NAIA school and member of the American Midwest Conference, dropped to 6-3.

"We did see some good things out there today for our team and at the same time, give Harris-Stowe some credit," SIUE head coach Jon Harris said. "They are a scrappy team."

SIUE used a 24-7 burst the final 7.5 minutes of the first half to overcome a nine-point deficit and build a 41-33 lead by the break. Jackson tallied eight of his 13 first-half points in closing out the half.

"I thought that was the difference in the game – the way our guys responded during that stretch," Harris said. "Brandon has been doing a great job for us and he was a big part of that run close to end of the first half. He has stepped up and produced for us and did some great things the entire game."

Jackson said, "Give credit to my teammates. They were trusting me to give me the ball. I'm getting more confidence and it all starts in practice."

He made 10 of 18 shots and 8 of 9 free throws to key the Cougars' strong foul shooting. They made 36 of 42 free throws to go along with 26 of 61 shooting from the floor. All figured, the two teams attempted 125 field goals and also took 59 foul shots. Harris-Stowe made 33 of 64 shots and converted 13 of 17 free throws.

"Free throws are all mental," Harris said. "When you start making them, it becomes contagious."

Williford sank four free throws in the final 19 seconds to ensure the victory, the Cougars' 15th consecutive win over the Hornets. SIUE leads the series 15-2.

SIUE's David Kinchen collected 12 points and teammate D.J. Jackson pitched in seven points and eight rebounds. The Cougars outrebounded the Hornets 41-33.

"D.J. really stepped up big for us, especially for a guy who hasn't played much for us this season," Harris said.

Nate Rigmaiden's 28 points powered Harris-Stowe, which used a 25-10 binge early in the second half to forge ahead 61-56. The Cougars countered with a 14-5 spree to grab a 70-66 advantage. Harris-Stowe closed to within 82-80 with 3:12 remaining, but Jackson punched in two baskets, the second with 1:02 to go, to give SIUE a six-point lead. The Cougars' final six points came on free throws.

"We found a way to get a win and at the end of the day, that's the most important thing," Harris said. "It's huge for us."

Next up for the Cougars is some road work. SIUE has four successive games away from home, starting with Drake University in Des Moines Iowa on Monday, Dec. 17.

SIUE then plays at Washington State on Dec. 19 before traveling to the Continental Tire Las Vegas Classic for a pair of games Dec. 22-23. The Cougars don't return home until Sunday, Dec. 30, when Missouri S&T of Rolla comes calling at 5 p.m.