

# Cougars' King pushes her team past McKendree for Coach Buscher's win No. 100

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EDWARDSVILLE – Christen King of the SIUE women's basketball team made her point with the game on the line Sunday afternoon.

The sophomore guard sank a tie-breaking free throw with 1.4 seconds remaining to give the Cougars a 64-63 win over McKendree at the Vadalabene Center. SIUE, playing at home for the first time since Nov. 11, improved to 5-6. The Cougars' previous nine games were on the road. McKendree is 8-3.

"I don't recall ever being in that situation," King said of her last-second pressure-packed heroics. "I shot the free throw like every other one I shoot, but I wanted to make both of them."

King, tallying a team-best 16 points and snaring 13 rebounds, didn't connect on the second foul shot. McKendree got the rebound, called a time out but missed a last-second shot.

"I know she Christen wanted to make both free throws, but she made the important free throw – the first one," said SIUE Head Coach Paula Buscher, registering her 100th career victory with the Cougars. She owns more than 300 college victories in all.

Buscher added, "Christen is just starting to come into her own. She's a tremendous athlete and can score in different ways. The sky's the limit for her."

Allie Troeckler contributed 13 points and eight rebounds for the Cougars, who made 24 of 64 shots. They hit on 3 of 10 treys and converted 13 of 19 free throws. SIUE outrebounded McKendree 44-30.

"The good part of this game is that we came out with a win," Buscher said. "But I love how McKendree plays. Give Head Coach Kari Kerkhoff (former SIUE assistant coach) credit because her team does a good job. They play tough, they play hard and they are fearless."

SIUE used a 12-0 run in the first half to build a 38-34 advantage by halftime. McKendree fought back to knot the score at 45-45 late in the third quarter. Then the Cougars went on an 18-2 spree to go ahead 63-47 midway through the fourth quarter.

However, McKendree responded with a 16-0 run to tie it 63-63 with 17.7 seconds remaining. The Bearcats had the ball and an opportunity to take the lead, but SIUE's Alek Akuen, who scored nine points, blocked a shot to thwart them.

The Cougars then got the ball to King, who was fouled. She made her first free throw and SIUE held on for the win.

"I knew it was very important to win this game," King said. "It was very important because we were coming off a long road stretch."

"We need to be competitive for 40 minutes and there were times when we played too safe and didn't play smart," Buscher noted. "We didn't do a good job down the stretch, and I was disappointed in the way we started the game."

Yet the Cougars survived their nonconference final and now begin their 18-game Ohio Valley Conference competition this week. They welcome Southeast Missouri at 5:30 Thursday and then travel to Eastern Illinois for a 1 p.m. Saturday in Charleston.

"We're looking to play better than we did today," Buscher said. "I'm looking for this team to be competitive and show a lot of toughness."

Sydney Diekhoff scored 21 points for McKendree. The Bearcats made 20 of 51 shots, including 5 of 16 from three-point range. They sank 18 of 25 free throws.