

Jessica Jones is Named SIUE Softball's Permanent Head Coach

by Joe Pott

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EDWARDSVILLE – Jessica Jones has been tabbed as SIUE softball's permanent Head Coach. Jones recently completed her first season as the Interim Head Coach and her sixth season as part of the Cougars' staff. Prior to receiving the Interim appointment, she spent four seasons as the Associate Head Coach.

"I'm excited and humbled for this opportunity to continue my career here," Jones said. "I would like to thank (SIUE Director of Athletics) Dr. Brad Hewitt for entrusting me with this program. I admire his leadership and everything he has done for me and this athletic department as a whole."

In 2019, Jones led SIUE to its seventh consecutive appearance in the Ohio Valley Conference Tournament. The Cougars fell in the opening round to Eastern Kentucky, finishing the season 16-28.

The 2019 team also earned a combined grade-point average of 3.70, which led the entire athletics department and was a program-high in the NCAA Division I era.

"SIUE is a great university academically and our program has been built with the vision of excellence," Jones continued. "I'm here to win in everything we do academically, athletically and in the community."

The Cougars have amassed 183 wins in six seasons with Jones on staff and earned 40-plus win seasons in 2015 and 2017. SIUE appeared in the NCAA Tournament in 2014 after winning the OVC Tournament and earning the automatic bid. The Cougars fell in the 2015 Championship game after winning the regular season OVC crown. From 2014-2017, SIUE made four consecutive appearances in the OVC Tournament Title game.

In her time in the Cougar dugout, Jones has been witness to a number of accomplishments.

SIUE pitcher Haley Chambers-Book became the first Cougar player to be drafted to play professionally. The left-handed pitcher also set the school record for career strikeouts.

During the 2017 season, the Cougars were a top 50 program nationally with a balanced approach of offense, defense and pitching. SIUE tossed two no-hitters, including the fifth career no-hitter for Chambers-Book and a shared no-hitter by Emily Ingles and Ashley Koziol. As a pitching staff, the Cougars finished with a 1.95 earned run average (20th nationally).

The SIUE defense ranked 14th nationally in fielding percentage (.976). SIUE's offense produced a .278 batting average that included 1.54 doubles per game (13th nationally).

In 2015, the Cougars finished the season with a Division I best 43 wins for the program. SIUE won its first OVC regular season title with an impressive 20-6 record in league play.

In her first season on staff in 2014, Jones was an integral part of SIUE's first-ever OVC Tournament title and appearance in the NCAA Division I Championship. Jones helped develop pitcher Chambers-Book, who was named the Most Valuable Player of the OVC Championship after winning consecutive games in the tournament over Tennessee Tech, Eastern Illinois, and Murray State. The Cougars also had three other players on the All-OVC Tournament team with third baseman Alex McDavid, first baseman Kayla Riggs, and shortstop Chelsea Yankolovich.

The Cougars have placed 15 players on All-OVC teams and 10 on OVC All-Newcomer teams since Jones' arrival.

She is only the third head coach in program history, following SIUE Athletics Hall of Famers Cindy Jones and Sandy Montgomery.

"I believe in the right fit," Jones said. "This is something I preach to my team. SIUE is the right fit for me and I am honored to continue the legacy, foundation and tradition of excellence this program was built on.

"Cindy Jones started what turned quickly into a championship program," Jones continued. "Her vision allowed for Sandy Montgomery to take over and lead this program to where it is today. I have now been given the opportunity to forge ahead and create a consistent, nationally-competitive program."

Prior to her arrival at SIUE, Jones was the Associate Head Coach at Buffalo for five seasons, spending most of the 2010 season as the Bulls' acting Head Coach. From 2005-2008 she was an assistant at Ohio University.

As a player, Jones was a four-year starter at Purdue from 1999-2003, spending a season at third base before finishing her career with three seasons as the Boilermakers' starting catcher. Jones spent the 2004 season as a student assistant at Purdue.

Jones earned a master's in business administration from Ohio and a bachelor's in public relations from Purdue.