

SIUE Women's Basketball Team Opens With Big Road Win, Downs Purdue Fort Wayne 66-50

by Eric Hess

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FT. WAYNE, Ind. - SIUE women's basketball scored a big road victory to start the season, downing Purdue Fort Wayne 66-50 at the Gates Sports Center.

[Ajulu Thatha](#) led the Cougars with 14 points and 11 rebounds while [Allie Troeckler](#) and [Mikayla Kinnard](#) added 13 and 12 points, respectively. Troeckler recorded her fifth career double-double with a team-leading 12 rebounds.

In a game that featured a share of peaks and valleys, SIUE certainly finished on a peak by outscoring the Mastodons 20-8 in the fourth quarter.

"We still had some energy attacking the basket because we have a great amount of depth on this team," said SIUE Head Coach [Paula Buscher](#). "I think the tough thing for me is going to be where the minutes go and who gets to play. Sometimes it's going to be whoever we think gives us the best chance of winning and whoever steps out on the court and is performing."

The Cougars also opened on a peak scoring the first six points of the game and taking a 19-11 lead after one period.

"I thought early on with did a nice job of basket cuts and attacking the rim hard," said Buscher.

Despite a 14-point lead for the Cougars in the second quarter, PFW picked up the pace to end the first half and begin the second half. The Mastodons tied the game 34-34 on a pair of free throws by Hannah Hess with 7:21 to play in the third period. Hess would lead all scorers with 18 points.

PFW stayed in the game and took as much as a four point lead in the third quarter behind nine three-pointers.

A strong defensive effort from SIUE held PFW to 25 percent (18-72) shooting for the game.

Although Thatha was SIUE's top scorer and posted her first career double-double, Buscher praised Thatha effort on defense.

"She was an absolute monster in there," said Buscher. "She deflected shots. She changed shots and went and got rebounds."

Buscher saw the resiliency in her players who fought off 28 turnovers.

"Our turnovers were killing us because we were trying to thread the needle so much," Buscher said. "I want to keep pushing but let's have a little bit of patience. It's so early in a crazy year that I'm just really pleased with how we stepped up out there."

SIUE now has seven days to get ready for its next opponent, a road contest at Arkansas State. The Dec. 2 game is scheduled for 5 p.m. in Jonesboro, Arkansas.

"We have a lot of work to do, but this was a nice win," said Buscher.

