

SIUE Plays Toe-To-Toe With LSU Thursday, But Falls 94-81 In St. Louis

by Joe Pott

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ST. LOUIS – SIUE men's basketball played toe-to-toe with LSU Thursday, falling in the end 94-81 at Chaifetz Arena.

"When you really look at how we played, that is the most positive thing coming from this game," SIUE Head Coach Brian Barone said. "I don't love that we gave up 90 points or we didn't get that stop to get over the hump, but I loved the way we played."

LSU, 1-0, got off to a quick start and built a 22-point lead with 11 minutes to play in the first half, but the Cougars whittled away at the lead. SIUE, 0-2, trimmed the lead to nine with 3:05 to play before half and trailed 49-34 at the break.

SIUE opened the second half scoring 26 of the first 39 points to pull within two at 62-60 after a layup from [Philip Pepple, Jr.](#) with 11:50 to play. An [Iziah James](#)' three-pointer with 9:13 left brought the Cougars within two again at 67-65. A 16-3 LSU run from that point stretched the margin to 15 with 5:11 left. SIUE pulled within 10, but never got closer.

The Cougars used strong shooting, particularly from three-point range, and good ball movement on offense. SIUE connected on 51 percent (29-57) of its shots and knocked down 13 of 27 (48 percent) of its three-point attempts.

The 13 made three-pointers marked the most for SIUE against a Division I opponent since a 2010 game at North Dakota.

"The reason we had good shooting was because of the way we moved the ball," Barone said. "There were a lot of times that we just stepping into the shot. When you're able to make those shots it will open up our driving lane.

The Cougars piled up 19 assists compared to 15 turnovers.

"We shared the ball," Barone said. "We had 10 assists at halftime, we had 19 for the game. Everyone was contributing. My two point guards had 10 assists and one turnover between them and that shows how we really played together. That was less than 24 hours after we didn't play like we needed to (against Saint Louis)."

[Mike Adewunmi](#) led SIUE in scoring with 23 points, just two points shy of his career high. He was 7-10 from the field, including 3-5 from three-point range, and 6-8 at the free throw line.

"I thought he took the right shots tonight," Barone said. "Yesterday he took some bad shots and we talked about it with him. He came in and took the right shots, he made free throws. He was tough around the rim and he rotated like he needed to. He just simplified his game. He really impacted the game and I was proud of him."

Pepple turned in the first double-double of the year with 13 points and 10 rebounds.

"I challenged him last night," Barone said. "He had one rebound last night against Saint Louis. Tonight he was up above the rim with one of the best rebounding teams in the

SEC. That's progress. He was challenged, he accepted it and he produced. He has an ability to score, and our guys trust throwing him the ball."

[Shamar Wright](#) added 12 points and four rebounds.

Freshman Cameron Thomas paced LSU with 27 points including four three-pointers. Darius Hays added 24 points for the Tigers and Trendon Watford scored 13 points.

The Cougars scored 26 points in the paint and got 28 points from its bench.

"To our guys' credit, they locked in yesterday after the game," Barone added. "They heard some things which were very direct regarding how we played. They watched a lot of film and they locked into a game plan and we executed a decent part of it. That is because of the effort they put into it.

"Tonight was one of the first times I thought we showed a huge trust among the team," Barone continued. "You could see the trust and the communication, and you could hear it."