

# Bills Defeat SIUE Men In Opener, Cougars Improve In Second Half

by Joe Pott

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ST. LOUIS – A much-improved second half for SIUE wasn't enough to overcome a quick start from Saint Louis as the Billikens ran past the Cougars 89-52 Wednesday in the season-opener for both schools.

"To put this thing together the way they (Saint Louis) did in like five days, says a lot about the people here," SIUE Head Coach Brian Barone said. "People found a way to get us here. We played a college basketball game and that's pretty awesome."

The Billikens shot 56 percent over the first 20 minutes, including 50 percent from three-point range, and raced out to a 30-point lead at the break.

"We were a step behind to start," Barone said. "You can't beat a very good Saint Louis team allowing what we allowed early in the game. We could have any excuse you want, but at the end of the day we still needed to box out, take care of the ball and guard the three-point line and unfortunately we didn't do that."

Javonte Perkins was 7-9 from the field and poured in 19 first half points. He finished with a game-high 22 points.

"We let Perkins get going pretty quick," Barone added.

SIUE shot just 32 percent in the first half and missed all six three-point attempts but bounced back to shoot 50 percent in the second period. The Cougars were 12-24 from the field and 2-5 from three-point range.

Barone credited the players for taking responsibility.

"I liked the fact that it wasn't me challenging them," he said. "They were saying the right stuff in the huddles. Even in the postgame."

The Billikens outrebounded the Cougars 40-28 and outscored SIUE 34-26 in the paint. Saint Louis scored 25 points off of 25 SIUE turnovers, while the Cougars forced 14 turnovers of their own, including 10 steals.

Junior [Sidney Wilson](#), a transfer from UConn, paced the Cougars on offense with 14 points and seven rebounds. He was 6-11 from the field and the only SIUE player in double figures.

"Sidney is a guy with high athleticism," Barone said. "He has played at a higher level. It was nice to see what he is capable of in flashes."

[Iziah James](#) chipped in seven points while three others, including [Lamar Wright](#) scored six points. It was a career high for Wright, who was 4-6 at the free throw line and added two assists.

"Lamar works really hard," Barone said. "He doesn't keep his head down. He believes in himself, he believes in what we're doing and I believe in him."

Jordan Goodwin added a double-double for SLU with 12 points and 11 rebounds. Three others finished with 11 points for the Billikens.

The Cougars continue their season-opening event with a 6 p.m. game Thursday against LSU.

"We showed our rust tonight, but behind the scenes in the process to just get here we did it in a way that really showed team unity."