

Cougars Erase Deficit, Outlast Morehead State To Win OVC Opener

by Joe Pott

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MOREHEAD, Ky. – SIUE men's basketball erased an early deficit and outlasted Morehead State to win its [Ohio Valley Conference](#) opener 69-65 Friday at Johnson Arena.

The Cougars improved to 3-4 overall and 1-0 in the OVC. It marks the second straight season the Cougars have won their OVC opener on the road.

"Overall, I am proud of the team effort," SIUE Head Coach Brian Barone said.

"Throughout the game, we had a lot of guys step up and make big plays. It was either big shots, big free throws or making big defensive stops."

Morehead State dropped to 4-5 and 1-2 in the OVC.

The Eagles got off to a 7-0 start before Barone called a timeout with 17:23 to play in the first half. The Cougars scored the next 12 straight points and went on 19-5 run, never trailing in the game again.

"I just let them know that I wasn't happy with how we started the game," Barone said. "We practice coming out of timeouts. I like how we responded to that 7-0 start."

SIUE built as much as an 11-point lead (25-14) in the first half and took a 35-30 advantage into the halftime.

After a back-and-forth start to the second half, Morehead State pulled even with the Cougars at 47 apiece when Ta'lon Cooper buried a three-pointer. The Cougars responded by scoring 15 of the next 20 points to lead 60-52 with 8:42 left. [Sidney Wilson](#) scored nine of the 15 points and had SIUE back up 10 (62-52) with a pair of free throws at 6:27. Wilson led the Cougars with 18 points in the game.

"We called a couple of plays for him," Barone said of Wilson. "He had a couple of post-ups in that stretch. He was in rhythm. Where you really saw him in rhythm was on the other end and pressuring at the top of the key defensively. It translated to the offensive end. He did a heck of job finishing."

Wilson also added career highs with nine rebounds and five assists.

Morehead State chipped away and got within three with 11 seconds to play after a Skyelar Potter three-pointer. [Cam Williams](#) hit one of two free throws with seven seconds left to seal the win.

Wilson, [Carlos Curtis](#) and [Lamar Wright](#) each had big rebounds to help SIUE close out the game's final two minutes.

"We had some big rebounds above the rim at the end of the game," Barone said.

The Cougars connected on 50 percent of their shots, hitting 26 of 52 attempts, including eight of 16 three-point attempts.

Curtis was the only other Cougar in double figures. He scored a career-best 13 points and added five rebounds. Williams scored nine points.

Johni Broome led Morehead State with 14 points. Potter scored 12, including three three-pointers.

The Eagles outrebounded SIUE 42-30.

"Our message the last couple of days has been around defense," Barone said. "When you're not rebounding, but you're still getting the stops that is huge."

The Cougars finished with 16 assists on 26 made baskets.

"We have to move the ball," Barone said. "We have to play inside out. We're not a team that can just live on the three."

SIUE returns home to continue OVC play Monday when Eastern Illinois comes to First Community Arena.

"Coming home with a win under our belt is exciting," Barone added. "We need to really compete at home. You have to defend your home court to win the league and that's our goal."