



SIUE Volleyball Heads to Chicago for Rambler Challenge

by Joe Pecarro

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EDWARDSVILLE – SIUE volleyball will head to the Windy City this weekend, as the Cougars will compete alongside Eastern Kentucky and Xavier in the Loyola Chicago-hosted Rambler Challenge.

Schedule

Friday, September 3 – 10 a.m. CT | SIUE vs. Xavier

Friday, September 3 – 7:30 p.m. CT | SIUE at Loyola Chicago

Saturday, September 4 – 12 p.m. CT | SIUE vs. Eastern Kentucky

NEWS & NOTES

SPRING RECAP: SIUE volleyball put together one of the most successful campaigns in program history last spring, compiling the third-highest conference winning percentage in the program's Division I era (.714) and earning one of just four spots in the 2020-21 Ohio Valley Conference Volleyball Championship. The season also saw four different Cougars earn All-OVC honors, including an All-OVC Second Team nod for redshirt sophomore middle blocker [Savannah Christian](#).

RETURNERS: Including the previously mentioned Christian, who was also named to the Preseason All-OVC squad, the Cougars return a number of key pieces from last season - these include Edwardsville native [Annie Ellis](#) and a standout newcomer from 2020 - outside hitter [Sydney Hummert](#).

NEWCOMERS: Head Coach [Kendall Paulus](#) and her staff have seen a number of stellar recruiting classes sign with the Cougars, but none might be more accomplished than this crop of newcomers. [Gabi Andrade](#) (Oswego, Ill.), [Grace Beekman](#) (Emden, Ill.), and [Ainsley Ranstead](#) (Mahomet, Ill.) will all wear the Red & White for the first time in 2021.

READY FOR A CHALLENGE: Coach Paulus has put together one of the most competitive non-conference schedules since assuming the helm, highlighted by the program's first match up against a "Power Five" school since 2017 when the Cougars play against Oregon State. Other highlights of the non-conference slate include matchups against Big East Conference power Xavier, former OVC rival Eastern Kentucky, a trio of opponents from the Missouri Valley Conference, and four opponents from "Group of Five" conferences.

COUGAR CLASSIC: The SIUE Cougar Classic returns to First Community Arena this fall, as the Red & White welcome Valparaiso and Western Illinois for a non-conference tournament from September 17-18.

SCOUTING THE OPPONENTS

Xavier enters Friday's contest with a 1-2 record, sweeping South Carolina State in their opening match before falling in four sets to Charlotte and Colorado. Xavier and SIUE have never met. Last spring, the Musketeers posted a 7-7 record. Xavier was selected to finish fourth in the Big East Conference and are led by Preseason All-Big East setter Carrigan O'Reilly.

Loyola Chicago enters the weekend at 1-2, taking down Oakland University in four sets before falling to No. 15 WKU and then-No. 25 Notre Dame. The Cougars and Ramblers last faced off on Sep. 2, 2012 in Terre Haute, Indiana, when SIUE emerged with the four-set win. The Ramblers were picked to finish third in the Missouri Valley Conference and are led by junior outside hitter Addie Barnes.

Eastern Kentucky enters at 1-2, registering a win over North Carolina-Greensboro in between losses to Appalachian State and Radford. In the spring season, the Colonels went 2-14, with their lone wins coming in a five-set match vs. UT Martin and a three-set sweep vs. Belmont. Eastern Kentucky and SIUE played last spring (Mar. 7-8) in Richmond, Ky., with the Cougars sweeping the first match and winning the second in five sets. The Colonels, who finished last in their final season in the Ohio Valley Conference, were selected to finish last in their first season as a member of the Atlantic Sun Conference and are led by Fan-Voted Preseason ASUN Defensive Player of the Year Sydney Schoen.