

Troy Pierce, Committed to SIUE: Men's Basketball Assistant is in his Third Season

by Joe Pott
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EDWARDSVILLE – SIUE men's basketball Assistant Coach [Troy Pierce](#) has no commitment issues.

Pierce, who is beginning his third season on Head Coach [Brian Barone](#)'s staff, has had opportunities to move on from SIUE, thanks to his years of experience at various institutions and several levels of college basketball. However, he sees support and commitment from the top down at SIUE.

"It starts with the people I work with every day," Pierce said. "Coach Barone is building something here. We have established a culture here, and we're bringing in the right guys and you can win here. We have supportive administration in (Director of Athletics) [Tim Hall](#) and (Deputy Athletic Director) [Jaci DeClue](#). You have all of that support system in place."

Barone believes in Pierce as well.

"Troy shows his commitment to me, SIUE, and the players every day." Barone said. "While his passion and communication skills are evident when you first meet him, it's his commitment to this team which stands out the most. In assistants I look for well-rounded, passionate, high IQ and selfless people. Troy knows he has room to grow, and that is what makes him special. His willingness to work on his weaknesses as he sharpens his strengths says something about his character. Troy has a self-awareness which will help take our program to great heights."

Pierce credits that support system for creating a culture and a successful environment. Specifically, he cites the support system for the program being able to persevere through the Covid-19 pandemic and reach the Ohio Valley Conference tournament.

"Look at the last year that we just went through," he said. "It wouldn't have been possible if we weren't a support system for those guys, and those guys a support system for us. It's not all sunshine and rainbows every day, so when you have people you can count on, that's what it's about."

With that success in hand, Pierce said the staff and players are ready to move forward.

"Was it rough? Yeah," Pierce admits. "But we're not in that year anymore. It's time to take a step forward. We have the guys that we have. They are going to work hard and we're going to do what we can to put them into the best situation to be successful."

The native of Emporia, Kansas, also considers the Cougars' coaching staff to be an asset for the program, but also to himself.

"You have a guy that played in the league (NBA) in Bubba Wells, a guy that worked in the league in [Colin Schneider](#), you have Coach Barone who has been at every level and

who has had success, and you have Coach [Mike Waldo](#) who is a 'basketball guru'," he said. "Me personally, I pull something from each one of those guys. We all have different pasts, but we're all here now."

Pierce also is glad to be getting back to in-person recruiting.

"It's huge," he exclaimed. "You get that face-to-face contact and interaction. You can't fake the 'Find-a-Way Family' that we preach. You can't fake the interaction and that general interest in one another."

He also believes the return to face-to-face recruiting will help stabilize the transfer market in college basketball.

"People chose those schools for the wrong reasons," he said. "I tell recruits, 'You have to make the decision based on who you want to yell at you next year.'"

"If we have a relationship and we've been around each other and you feel the energy within the team then the first time I yell at you in practice or I hold you accountable you're not going to run to get in the portal. You are going to rely on that relationship that we have and that camaraderie that we have built. And you have other people around you who are supporting you as well."

Pierce believes in giving back.

"Ultimately that is why I coach," he said. "Basketball gave me a lot of things that I might not have. I have an associate's, a bachelor's and a masters. I met my wife in college, and we have two wonderful kids. Basketball has given me so much and I feel like I have to give back."

He also believes that SIUE and the men's basketball programs is preparing student-athletes to be more than just basketball players.

"It isn't like that everywhere," Pierce said. "We had the highest team GPA in school history. Guys are being held accountable on the court and off the court. It is a tribute to our guys. It is a tribute to Coach Barone. It is a tribute to (Academic Advisor) Farrah (Young) and again, that support system they have."

"Eventually the basketball does stop bouncing and you don't have someone telling you where to be, what to do, how to do it," he continued. "We're not teaching them the right way if they have to rely on us for literally everything. We want them to learn. It is the definition of 'Find a way.'"

As for the upcoming season, Pierce is optimistic.

"With the pieces we've added and the returners who are here, we have a good recipe for success," he said. "If we continue to stay on the path and not take no for an answer, we're going to be all right."