


# SIUE Volleyball Celebrates Senior Day, Cougars Fall In Pair To Murray State

by Joe Pott

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**3**

►

**Murray St.**
17-11,11-7 OVC



**2**

**SIUE**
6-23,3-15 OVC

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Murray St.	16	25	25	20	15	(3)
SIUE	25	15	9	25	13	(2)

EDWARDSVILLE – SIUE volleyball wrapped up its 2021 fall season Saturday with a hard-fought, five-set loss to Murray State on senior day at First Community Arena.

The Cougars finished the season at 6-23 overall and 3-15 in Ohio Valley Conference play. Murray State improved to 17-11 overall and 11-7 in the OVC after the 16-25, 25-15, 25-9, 20-25, 15-13 win.

Bolstered by a six-point run late in the first set, SIUE grabbed the first set, hitting .243 for the game, while limiting the Racers to just a .070 hitting percentage. The Racers turned the tables in the second and third sets. Murray State hit .333 in the third and ran away with the fourth set, hitting .476, while keeping SIUE in the red in both sets.

Trailing 11-7 in the fourth set, the Cougars seized control with another lengthy scoring run. SIUE won seven straight points and 10 of 11 to lead 17-12. SIUE fended off a late run by the Racers who trimmed a 24-17 lead to 24-20 before the Cougars finished off the set.

Murray State then edged SIUE in a competitive fifth set. The Racers won the first three points and never trailed in the set. SIUE pulled even at nine but Murray State won two of the next three points to lead 12-10. The Cougars tied the set at 12 before the Racers won three of the final four points.

"This game is our season in a nutshell," SIUE Head Coach [Kendall Paulus](#) said. "A lot of high highs and a lot of lows. To bounce back from the lows is all we ask for. We've gone through that all season together. It has brought us really close. This is the closest team I have ever coached here. To see that and how much they love each other and to see how much better we've gotten individually on the court. I only see a bright future moving forward. I hope that they feel that way too."

[Savannah Christian](#) led SIUE with 14 kills and a .276 hitting percentage. [Annie Ellis](#) added eight kills, hit .217 and contributed eight blocks. Julia Triechel collected nine kills and nine digs. [Nicole Kijowski](#) turned 18 digs and [Alyse Drifka](#) added 27 assists.

The Cougars hit .114 for the match, while the Racers hit .182. Brooke Lynn Watts led the Racers with 19 kills while hitting .269.

The Cougars honored five seniors prior to the match. [Hannah Bagley](#), Ellis, [Grace Hurst](#), [Ellen LeMasters](#) and [Leila Manaois](#) each finished their Cougar careers.

"We love this class," Paulus said of the seniors. "They are extremely coachable. They are open-minded. They allow our team to be ourselves. They have put us in the position to be as close as we are and push each position to work harder every day."

"They are the epitome of student-athletes," Paulus continued. "Most of them have jobs lined up. I have never had this many people have jobs before they're done with the season. They have loved their time at SIUE. They have taken advantage of everything to prepare themselves. This shows you what SIUE can do for a student-athlete. They are prime examples of that.



**SIUE Volleyball Drops Contest Against Murray State****EDWARDSVILLE** - Despite a valiant defensive effort, SIUE volleyball fell to Murray State in five sets on Friday night (25-23, 15-25, 19-15, 26-24, 11-15).

The first set saw both squads trade points, but even an outstanding eight total blocks from the Cougars proved to be the difference as the hosts would secure a highly-competitive opening set. However, it would be all Racers in the second and third set, as the visitors hit .520 in the second set and .333 in the third to claim a pair of convincing set victories and go up 2-1 heading into the fourth. The Cougars would not leave quietly, registering a match-high 16 kills and hitting for a team-best .318 to secure the fourth set win and send the contest to a decisive fifth. Despite holding the Racers to their lowest hitting percentage of the night, the Red & White's own offensive woes proved costly and saw the Cougars surrender the match.

As a team, the Cougars registered a season-best 18 total blocks in the match while also recording five service aces. Three Cougars reached double-digit kills on the night - [Annie Ellis](#), who led SIUE with 12, followed closely by [Julia Treichel's](#) 11 and [Ainsley Ranstead](#) with 10. Ellis hit .300 in the match and notched an outstanding 11 block assists in the five-set match. Ranstead led the Cougars with a hitting percentage of .409. [Alyse Drifka](#) led the Cougars with 21 assists, with [Grace Beekman](#) not too far behind with 19 to her credit. [Nicole Kijowski](#) led the Red & White with 18 digs on the night.

With tonight's loss and a 3-1 win for Eastern Illinois over Austin Peay, SIUE is eliminated from 2021 Ohio Valley Conference Volleyball Championship contention.