



# **Weekend Roundup: Niagara Uses Second-Half Push to Down Cougars, St. Thomas Shoots Past SIUE**

by Joe Pott

November 22 2021 4:02 PM



YOUNGSTOWN, Ohio – SIUE dropped its opening game at the YSU/J. Arnold Wealth Management Company Tournament 70-60 to Niagara.

The Cougars fell to 1-3. Niagara improved to 1-2.

"We have a good group of guys who fought and who want to win," SIUE Head Coach [Brian Barone](#) said. "They care and they are frustrated right now because they sense we let one get away from us."

After falling behind 7-2 early, SIUE battled back to tie the game at seven on a three-pointer by [DeeJuan Pruitt](#) at 14:46. It was 9-8 Niagara, when the Cougars scored the next 10 points to lead 18-9 with 9:42 left in the half. A three-point play by Pruitt with 5:38 to play in the first half, gave the Cougars their largest lead at 26-13.

SIUE led 30-24 at the break. SIUE twice got the lead back to eight in the second half. It was 35-27 after a [Ray'Sean Taylor](#) layup with 17:43 left and then the Purple Eagles made their push. Niagara scored 12 of the next 15 points to lead 39-38. The Cougars briefly regained the lead at 41-39, but Niagara's Marcus Hammond hit a three-pointer with 11:26 to play to give the Purple Eagles a lead they'd never relinquish.

"They got the loose balls," Barone said of Niagara. "We stopped rebounding. We were getting stops, but they'd get to the loose ball and put it in. We stopped moving the ball like we needed to."

Niagara was 5-10 from three-point range in the second half and shot 44 percent overall for the second half. SIUE shot just 37 percent for the game and 33 percent from three-point range.

"They went to the zone, and we were getting really good looks, but we stopped reversing the ball and doing what the game plan was," Barone added. "We got stagnant and a little hesitant."

The Cougars turned the ball over nine times after halftime, following just five turnovers in the first 20 minutes.

[Shamar Wright](#) led all scorers with 20 points, to tie his career high. He was 8-15 from the field and added a game-best nine rebounds.

"He was playing hard, and he was sticking to what the thought process was going into the game," Barone said of Wright. "He was moving around, and guys were finding him. Shamar did a good job."

Pruitt added 12 points and five rebounds. [Ray'Sean Taylor](#) scored 12 points, all coming in the second half, after missing most of the first half with foul trouble. [Shaun Doss, Jr.](#) scored five points and grabbed seven rebounds.

Hammond led Niagara with 16 points.

SIUE will continue tournament play with hosts Youngstown State Saturday afternoon at 1 p.m. CT.



"You watch some film and just go to work," Barone said. "You have to be able to accept that there were some mistakes tonight, but really, we have to move on. As coaches we'll address a few things, but the reality is that we have to game plan for Youngstown State who we see in less than 24 hours. We'll be ready."



### St. Thomas Shoots Past SIUE in Youngstown

YOUNGSTOWN, Ohio – A balanced, strong offensive performance wasn't enough for SIUE men's basketball Sunday. The Cougars concluded their time at the YSU/J. Arnold Wealth Management Company Tournament Sunday with an 86-73 loss to St. Thomas.

The Cougars finished 1-2 at the tournament and are now 2-4 overall. St. Thomas finished the tournament at 2-1 and are 3-3 overall.

"That's a really good team," SIUE Head Coach [Brian Barone](#) said. "They've progressively gotten better and better. They didn't lose a game last year. I don't care what division they came from. That's a really good team."

Both teams shot the ball well Sunday, but it was the Tommies' three-point shooting, and specifically in the first half, that allowed them to pull away from the Cougars.

Both sides connected on 50 percent of their shots. SIUE tied its season high with 30 made baskets out of 60 total attempts. The 50 percent was a season-high success rate for the Cougars. SIUE was 8-18 (44 percent) from three-point range.

St. Thomas was 28-56 overall and 14-34 (41 percent) from three-point range. The Tommies were 11-21 from three in the first half. St. Thomas averaged just under 15 made three-pointers per game in the three-day event.

Ryan Lindberg did the majority of the damage from beyond the arc. He was 8 for 10 for 24 points, with all of his production coming in the first half to help St. Thomas to a 50-34 lead at the break.

"We let him go 8 for 10 in the first half," Barone said. "A lot of those were undisciplined flying at the ball. Our guys want it. They want success, they want to do right. Unfortunately, we almost wanted it too much on some of our closeouts. We had too many fly-bys."

St. Thomas took advantage of nine more opportunities at the free throw line. The Tommies were 16-19 in free throws, while SIUE was just 5-10. SIUE had three technical fouls assessed to team as well.

"You have to harness your emotions," Barone added. "There is a fine line between playing with reckless abandon and with a certain amount of focus. We didn't keep our energy completely focused on the game-on defense or getting extra points in a possession-things like that."

[Ray'Sean Taylor](#) scored 15 points to lead four SIUE players in double figures. He was 6-12 from the field and 3-5 from three-point range. [Courtney Carter](#) scored a season-high 14 points. Shaun Doss, Jr, also scored 14 points while [Lamar Wright](#) added a season-best 10 points. [Shamar Wright](#) and [Cam Williams](#) each scored seven points. Shamar added 10 rebounds, the second highest mark of his career.

"[Shamar Wright](#) over the last three or four games has gotten back to who he was," Barone said of the redshirt-sophomore. And Lamar came out and got two rebounds to change the game."

SIUE shot 50 percent total and was 6 for 10 from three-point range after halftime.

"There are a lot of positives you can take from this game," Barone added. "And there are things you need to grow on."

The Cougars will not play their next game until after Thanksgiving, when they face Creighton on the road in Omaha on Sat., Nov. 27.

"When you have the opportunity to be thankful for the things that you have, and the people that have helped to get you those things, you take it," Barone said. "It will be a high-level of focus this week on the concept of family and togetherness. That is what we do and it's real."