

Cougars Drop Road Contest At Tennessee Tech

by Eric Hess

January 21 2022 5:51 AM



COOKEVILLE, Tenn. – SIUE's [Gabby Nikitinaite](#) led all scorers with 20 points, but the Cougars fell to Tennessee Tech on the road 75-60.

The game was broadcast nationally on ESPNU as part of We Back Pat, which honors Hall of Fame Coach Pat Summitt and brings awareness to the fight against Alzheimer's.

Nikitinaite hit four three-pointers in her first starting assignment since Jan. 1. She added four assists and four steals while shooting 7 of 18 from the field.

[Mikayla Kinnard](#), also in the starting lineup for the first time since Jan. 1, was the only other player in double figures for the Cougars with 12 points.

"It was great to get Gabby and Mikayla more minutes," said SIUE Head Coach [Samantha Quigley Smith](#). The duo played 30 and 29 minutes, respectively.

The Cougars, 6-10 overall and 2-3 in the Ohio Valley Conference, played well in the opening quarter, taking a 16-15 lead.

Tennessee Tech, 9-7 overall and 4-2 in the OVC, rebounded with a strong second period by shooting 7 of 13 from the field in the quarter and grabbing a 39-32 lead by halftime.

"We went through a bad stand in the third quarter, and I think we really couldn't recover from it," said Smith.

SIUE fell behind by as much as 15 in the third period before making a run to pull within 10 with one period left.

The Cougars also were without reigning OVC Freshman of the Week [Sofie Lowis](#), who has been battling through an injury. Lowis had started the four games and had hit 10 three-pointers during that stretch.

The Golden Eagles, powered by 15 points from Jada Guinn, 13 from Kesha Brady and 12 from Mackenzie Coleman, pushed the lead to as many as 22 in the fourth period on a key scoring run. Tennessee Tech shot 45.6 percent for the game (26-57) and connected on 18 of 21 from the free throw line.

SIUE held strong on one of its bellwether statistics, equaling Tennessee Tech with 37 rebounds. The Cougars grabbed 16 offensive boards.

"That was good for us to be tied on that range and to a taller team," said Smith. "We just have to clean it up on the offensive end. There were so many unforced turnovers."

SIUE committed 19 turnovers, and Tennessee Tech scored 21 points off those miscues.

Smith also noted the first start of the season for [Prima Chellis](#), who scored four points and grabbed six rebounds.

"She created turnovers for us," said Smith. "She creates some chaos and makes it difficult for the other team's guards."

The Cougars next travel to Morehead, Kentucky, to close out this three-game road trip Saturday. A 1 p.m. CT tipoff is set for SIUE against Morehead State.