

SIUE Women's Basketball Team Fights Mightily, Falls in OVC Quarterfinals to Third-Seeded Murray State

by Joe Pecoraro

March 4 2022 11:16 AM



EVANSVILLE, Ind. - SIUE women's basketball put forth a valiant effort, but could not overcome a slow start in an 84-76 loss to No. 3 seed Murray State in the 2022 Ohio Valley Conference Women's Basketball Championship quarterfinal game on Thursday evening.

The Racers got off to a blazing hot start, shooting 57 percent from the field and knocking down a trio of three-point baskets to take a nine-point lead after the opening 10 minutes. The Cougars found their footing in the second period, going 8-of-17 from the field and trading baskets with the third-seeded Racers. SIUE would outscore Murray State in the second and went into the halftime break down eight.

The second half began with neither squad able to find the bottom of the basket, as both teams went on long stretches without a made field goal; however, the slow start to the second half would not last, as both teams again began trading buckets. The final period of play saw the Cougars' relentless attitude, racing around the court and putting together the team's largest single-period scoring margin of the contest. The effort was not enough to overcome lights-out Murray State shooting, and the Red & White fell to the Racers by single-digits for the second-consecutive game.

"It was just a tough one," said SIUE Head Coach [Samantha Quigley Smith](#) following the game. "I thought we hung with them. But I'm just really proud of our effort - we could've rolled over and lost by 25 or 30, but I think all around it was a great ending to the season. We win three at the end to put ourselves in the OVC Tournament and we win a First Round game."

SIUE was led by [Mikayla Kinnard](#), who went off for a team-high 24 points and collected five rebounds in the contest. [Gabby Nikitinaite](#) followed close behind with 19 points, shooting 50 percent from the field. [Prima Chellis](#) came just one basket shy of a double-double, putting together an eight point, 10 rebound performance. [Mikia Keith](#) and [Mikala Hall](#) both recorded six points, and [Allie Troeckler](#) and [Ajulu Thatha](#) each added four. [Masyn McWilliams](#) buried a basket from beyond the arc, [Kelsie Williams](#) notched a basket in her final collegiate game. [Sofie Lowis](#) and [Madison Hackstadt](#) also saw action in the game.

"I'm so proud of our senior class who has really bought in to a new coaching staff coming in and establishing a new culture and a new style of play," added Smith. "They really bought into everything that we were trying to do."

SIUE finishes the season at 13-18 and 8-10 in OVC play and earned its first postseason victory since the 2018 season last night in a thrilling 84-82 win over sixth-seeded UT Martin. The Red & White also notched regular season wins over opponents from the Atlantic 10 (Saint Louis), Big East (Butler), and Big Ten (Illinois), the first time in program history that a team has won games against an opponent from all three conferences in the same season.

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