

Irish nip Cougars on opening day

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NORMAN, Okla. – SIUE and Notre Dame battled in a back-and-forth contest Friday. In the end it was the Fighting Irish who earned a come-from-behind 7-6 win on the opening day of baseball season.

"We played a little nervous the first four or five innings today," SIUE Head Coach Tony Stoecklin said. "After that we settled down and started playing ball."

An uncharacteristically rocky first inning for SIUE starter [Ryan Daniels](#) allowed Notre Dame to take an early lead. The first three batters reached thanks to a walk and two hit batters. A pickoff by Cougar catcher [Parker Guinn](#) at first base, and a flyout made it two on, two out when RBI singles by the Irish's Robert Youngdahl and Lane Richards made it 2-0.

Daniels tossed three innings allowing the two runs on three hits. He struck out one.

"He's battling command all spring so far," Stoecklin said of Daniels. "He's putting a little too much pressure on himself to be perfect instead of just controlling what he can control."

[Chase Green](#)'s first homer of the year with one out in the second got the Cougars on the board and made it 2-1.

Notre Dame went up 5-1 with a single run in the fourth and two runs in the fifth against Cougar reliever [Zach Malach](#). Malach also threw 3.1 innings. He allowed the three runs on six Irish hits. He struck out five.

"Zach battled out there," Stoecklin said of the lefthander. "He gave us an opportunity to win."

SIUE scored twice in the sixth thanks to an RBI-double by Alex Saikal and a sacrifice fly from [Collin Book](#).

Guinn kicked off a three-run Cougar seventh inning with his first home run in a Cougar uniform. [Dustin Woodcock](#) doubled with one out and then scored on an RBI-triple from [Nick Lombardo](#) to tie the game. [Denton Reed](#) followed with an RBI-hit to drive home Lombardo and move the Cougars in front 6-5.

Notre Dame catcher Ryan Lidge hit a two-run home run off [Brett Thomas](#) in the bottom of the inning to move the Fighting Irish back in front for good.

Green finished 2 for 4 with the homer. Parker Guinn was 1 for 4 with the home run.

"Both of those guys took good at-bats today," Stoecklin said.

Notre Dame out hit SIUE 11-7. Richards led the way for the Fighting Irish. He was 3 for 5. Youngdahl was 2 for 4.

In all Cougar pitchers hit four batters and issued six walks. Stoecklin pointed to the free passes as the key to the game.

"You're not going to win many games where you hit four and walk six," he said. "It's hard enough competing with the other team without adding on the mistakes which are detrimental."

SIUE takes on Oklahoma Saturday. First pitch is scheduled for 1 p.m.

"The key is getting rid of those jitters," Stoecklin added. "We need to come out and pound the strike zone."