

Auburn Tournament To Challenge Cougars

by siuecougars.com

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EDWARDSVILLE – After an idle week, the SIUE softball team returns to the road for the Wilson/DeMarini Softball Tournament in Auburn, Alabama.

The Cougars will have a daunting schedule ahead with five games over the three-day tournament, beginning with Connecticut (3-2) and Texas State (9-7) Friday. On Saturday, SIUE faces Samford (12-2) and No. 16-ranked Auburn (17-1). The tournament concludes Sunday with a meeting against Ohio State (9-3).

"We've tried to continue to play tougher competition each weekend," said SIUE Head Coach Sandy Montgomery. "You can't overlook anyone in Division I."

SIUE has previously faced Samford and Auburn once. It will be SIUE's first-ever meeting against Connecticut, Texas State, and Ohio State.

"We could come out of this weekend making a name for ourselves or we could come out of this weekend hopefully playing well and just trying to stay above .500," said Montgomery. "Quite frankly, either one of those is OK with me. We need to continue to get better."

Off to a 7-2 start, Montgomery said the Cougars need to continue to compete at a high level in tough situations.

"We've played awfully well early," said Montgomery. "For them to continue to get better, I'm looking forward to what we can be at the end of the year."

[Haley Chambers](#) leads the Cougars on offense and defense. She holds a .464 batting average with three home runs and eight runs batted in. In the circle, Chambers is 5-0 with a 7-to-1 strikeout-to-walk ratio over 30 innings of play. She has a 0.93 earned run average.

Montgomery said freshman pitcher [Baylee Douglass](#) also is a player to be watched.

"Baylee is going to be a factor no matter who we play. She has come into tough situations, and she is able to get the job done," said Montgomery.

Douglass has a 0.00 ERA in 12 1/3 innings of work. She has a 1-1 record with two saves and 17 strikeouts.

Sophomore [Allison Smiley](#) is the offensive team leader in RBIs with 10. [Tess Eby](#), [Rebecca Gray](#), [Rachel Keller](#), and [Alex McDavid](#) all enter the weekend hitting better than .300.

"Alex is seeing the ball pretty well right now," said Montgomery. "Whether she plays shortstop or third, I certainly like our chances."

As a team, SIUE is hitting .311 with 71 hits in nine games. The pitching staff holds a 1.88 earned run average in 56 innings.

Montgomery said the cold weather and snow in the area has made it a challenge because teams prefer not to practice indoors after having played several games outdoors.

"We're doing everything we would do outside," said Montgomery. "We're not the only team in this scenario. There are teams all over the country that are having awful weather – even in the south."