

SIUE Men's Basketball Opens Season With Home Win

by Joe Pott

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EDWARDSVILLE – DeeJuan Pruitt and Damarco Minor each turned in double-doubles Monday as SIUE opened the 2022-23 basketball season with an 85-57 win over Harris-Stowe at First Community Arena.

SIUE improved to 38-17 all-time in home openers and has won 16 consecutive games over Harris-Stowe.

"I thought we did a really good job of coming out tonight," SIUE Head Coach Brian Barone said. "It started with our transition offensively, which triggers from our defense. We were very willing to share the ball. We had a couple of careless turnovers that I would like down below 10. Harris-Stowe is a very well-coached team that came ready to fight."

Pruitt earned his fourth career double-double leading all players with 20 points and 10 rebounds. It is the first 20-point game of his career. He was 8 for 11 from the field. The contest marked the sixth time he has grabbed at least 10 rebounds in a game.

"It was a great opportunity for us to come out, get our team chemistry together, and show who we are in front of our fans," Pruitt said.

Minor scored 11 points while also dishing out 10 assists on the night for his first double-double as a Cougar. He added two steals and did not commit a turnover.

"I just like being around people who work hard, and that's what we do," Minor said. "It's fun playing around hard-workers and people who push me to be better as well."

Lamar Wright came within two points of his career high, scoring 18 points in 21 minutes off the bench. He was 6 for 11 overall and 3 for 4 from three-point range.

"Someone who stood out tonight was Lamar Wright," added Barone. "He came out with phenomenal energy. His play just changed the game for us in the first half. He came out, took the right shots, and had big rebounds for us."

Making his regular-season return from his second ACL tear, Ray'Sean Taylor scored 10 points and added four rebounds. It is the 20th time in 22 career games that Taylor has scored in double figures. Jalen Hodge was 3 for 6 from long range and added nine points.

"For me personally, it's just a blessing to be back out there coming off two major injuries," said Taylor. "I just wanted to go out there and have fun, and that's what we did."

The Cougars connected on 53 percent (17-32) of their shots and knocked down 8 of 23 three-pointers.

SIUE outscored Harris-Stowe 42-24 inside. The Cougars outrebounded the Hornets 40-28 on their way to a 20-5 advantage in second-chance points.

Harris-Stowe was led by Alex Nunnally's 12 points and four rebounds. Jamarric Hammond scored 11 and also grabbed four rebounds.

SIUE goes on the road for the first time when it travels to Purdue Fort Wayne for a Saturday afternoon contest. Tipoff is slated for 12 p.m. CT.

"We have to keep learning what gamedays are like," Barone said. "It's awesome to see this type of engagement from the community. Hopefully we will continue to make them proud."