

Minor's Double-Double Lifts Cougars to Road Win at Southern Indiana

by Joe Pott

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EVANSVILLE, Ind. – SIUE's first meeting with Southern Indiana since 2008 proved to be a classic. The former Division II conference rivals met for the first time as Division I conference rivals Saturday with SIUE picking up a hard-earned 69-62 win on the road.

The Cougars handed the Screaming Eagles their first home loss this season and improved to 12-5 overall and 3-1 in Ohio Valley Conference play.

"That was a battle," SIUE Head Coach [Brian Barone](#) said. "It was a great atmosphere, and our guys were prepared for it. Guys came out and made plays."

The 12 wins equals SIUE's most at the Division I level. The win is just the fifth for the Cougars in 30 all-time contests at Southern Indiana.

"I am so proud of these guys right now," Barone added. "This is big time."

[Damarco Minor](#) enjoyed a career-night to lead the Cougars, scoring 27 points and hauling 11 rebounds. It was his second straight double-double. Minor was 3-10 overall, 2-7 from three-point range and a perfect 15-15 at the free throw line.

"He's a tough dude," Barone said. "He wants it so much. I love that I can coach him really hard and that he responds. That's back-to-back games where he went out there and did that."

USI (8-9, 1-3) came out firing from long range and hit five three-pointers early in the game. Tyler Henry's three with 11:48 to play put the Screaming Eagles up 19-15. SIUE took over with a 10-0 run to lead 25-19 after a pair of free throws from [Ray'Sean Taylor](#) with 8:38 left in the half.

The Cougars held the Screaming Eagles to just one more three in the first half and led by six at the break.

"They locked down," Barone said of his team.

SIUE built as much as a 15-point lead in the second half before USI forged a comeback. After [Terrance Thompson](#) made it 57-42 with 8:30 left in the game, USI used an 11-2 run to trim the lead to six with 4:50 left. The Cougars pushed the lead back to 64-54, but Southern Indiana used an 8-2 spurt to get it 66-62 with 1:24 left.

Isaiah Swope had a chance to cut the lead to two, but missed a jumper with 55 seconds to play. Minor grabbed the rebound and SIUE was able to run the clock inside of 20 seconds before USI got the ball back. Jelani Simmons missed a three for the Eagles with 14 seconds left and [DeeJuan Pruitt](#) was fouled after grabbing the rebound. He hit one of two to extend SIUE's lead to five.

Pruitt blocked Swope's running layup attempt with eight seconds left and Minor drew a foul chasing down the rebound. Minor sank both for the seven-point final.

"These road wins in an atmosphere like this are big," Barone said. "We came off a top-tier win on Thursday, and we were able to be more cerebral last night. We were able to coach the guys and show them the scout and then they implemented it tonight."

Pruitt finished with 10 points and six rebounds. Taylor scored 12 points and was 4-5 at the free throw line. SIUE was 25-30 (83 percent) from the charity stripe.

The Cougars forced USI into 16 turnovers and capitalized for 28 points. SIUE also scored 24 points in the paint.

After the early success from long-range, USI was just 2-12 from three-point range in the second half and just 8-28 in the game.

Swope finished with a team-high 19 points for Southern Indiana. Trevor Lakes scored 16 and was 4-10 from three-point range.

SIUE remains on the road for Thursday match-up at Eastern Illinois.