

Cougars Drop Saturday Night Contest to Screaming Eagles

by Owen Hetherington
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EVANSVILLE, Ind. – Sophomore guard [Sofie Lewis](#) tied a career high in scoring with 22 points, but Southern Indiana took the lead two minutes into the contest and never looked back, downing the Cougars 79-59 on Saturday night at Screaming Eagles Arena.

SIUE falls to 3-12 on the season and 2-2 in its Ohio Valley Conference schedule. Southern Indiana improves to 8-7 and 2-2.

"Southern Indiana did a great job at making it difficult for us," Head Coach [Samantha Quigley Smith](#) said. "They shot lights out offensively. We didn't do a good enough job of making consecutive stops. That made it challenging for us on the offensive end to have any sort of primary break off a stop."

[Madison Webb](#) gave SIUE its first bucket of the game, but the Screaming Eagles responded with a 10-0 run. Southern Indiana outscored the Cougars 23-25 in the first quarter and shot a game high 60 percent (9-15) from the field.

USI entered the locker room at halftime with a 14-point advantage, leading 38-24. SIUE's forwards, [Ajulu Thatha](#) and [Olivia Clayton](#), ran into foul trouble with three each at the break.

"We have to be cleaner and stay out of foul trouble," added Smith. "Our aggressiveness has to be channeled and understand that you have to be disciplined. At the end of the day, we have to guard and keep people in front to make things difficult. We didn't do a good enough job with our ball pressure."

The Cougars shot 35 percent (12-34) and 0-7 from long range in the second half, while USI shot 44 percent (4-9) from deep.

"We need to finish," said Smith. "We had a lot of point-blank range shots at the rim and didn't do a good enough job of being patient and finishing."

SIUE concluded the game shooting 31 percent (21-68) from the field. USI shot 39 percent (27-69) from the floor and 35 percent (7-20) from three-point territory. Southern Indiana outrebounded the Cougars 53-44 and had 21 assists compared to the Cougars' five.

"Southern Indiana is a big and strong team," said Smith. "We need to keep teams like them off the glass. It was a big point of emphasis coming into the game. It starts with defensive rotations and keeping someone in front of you."

Lewis was SIUE's lone player in double-figures, tying a career-high with 22 points. She was 7-17 from the field, tying a season-high in field goals made. She also finished 7-10 at the line, good for a career high in free throws made.

Webb led SIUE with nine rebounds while Clayton and [KK Rodriguez](#) picked up four steals apiece. Rodriguez also contributed nine points.

The Screaming Eagles were led by Vanessa Shafford who finished the game with a double-double. She had 18 points and 12 rebounds.

The Cougars return to action on Thursday, Jan. 12 at Eastern Illinois. Tip-off is slated for 5:00 p.m.

"Eastern Illinois is another well coached and good program who's having a good season," said Smith. "We need to come ready to play and have some intensity on the defensive end."