

# SIUE SAAC Celebrates Year With 2023 Cougar Choice Awards

by Owen Hetherington  
May 2 2023 1:48 PM



EDWARDSVILLE – SIUE's Student Athletic Advisory Counsel (SAAC) celebrated the 2022-23 athletic year with the Cougar Choice Awards on Thursday, April 27 at the Wildey Theater in downtown Edwardsville. Tanner Collins of golf and Max Kristoff of wrestling served as hosts of the event.

## **Highlight of the Year: Ray'Sean Taylor (Men's Basketball)**

The Highlight of the Year Award goes to a student-athlete who delivered a clutch play, game changing moment, or outstanding performance that results in the #1 standout

moment of the year in SIUE athletics. Nominees for this award were selected by the Sports Information Staff and Coaches and the winner was voted on by head coaches and our SAAC members.

**Male Newcomer of the Year: Demarco Minor (Men's Basketball)**

**Female Newcomer of the Year: Macy Silvey (Women's Basketball)**

The Newcomer of the Year goes to one student-athlete from a women's team and one student-athlete from a men's team. These athletes are in their first year of competition at SIUE and have had the most profound impact on their team. Any freshman, red-shirt freshman or transfer student competing for the first year as a Cougar is eligible for this award.

**For the Love of the Game Award: Taylor Spiller (Women's Soccer)**

This award is given to a student-athlete who works hard, competes, and makes a significant contribution to his or her team because they truly have a love of the sport. These student-athletes show passion for their sport daily and consistently give their all for the love of the game. Nominations for this award come from fellow student-athletes, coaches, and departmental staff. The winner was voted on by SAAC members and head coaches.

**Courage Award: Ray'Sean Taylor (Men's Basketball)**

The Courage Award was created to honor a student athlete or group that has demonstrated heart and perseverance in the face of a challenge. Nominees for this award display athletic excellence, perseverance, determination, and a will to succeed regardless of the challenges and obstacles that they may face.

**Cougar Excellence Award: Chase Diehl (Wrestling), Courtney Vollmer (Women's Soccer), and Melissa Vizcardo (Tennis)**

The Cougar Excellence Award was developed in 2004 by Deputy Athletic Director, Jaci DeClue, to recognize a student-athlete from both the men's and women's teams with the highest-grade point average that are completing their eligibility and have competed as a SIUE Cougar for at least three years. Recipients of this award received an SIUE diploma frame.

**Male Cougar Cadre: Sam Layton (Men's Soccer)**

**Female Cougar Cadre: Melissa Vizcardo (Tennis)**

The Cougar Cadre Award was developed by the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee to recognize student-athletes who demonstrate leadership, sportsmanship, and commitment to academics, athletics, and the community. Cougar Cadre nominees from each team must have earned a minimum grade point average of 3.0 and earned at least one varsity letter. These individuals were nominated by their teammates, with the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee voting on the Cougar Cadre Captains.

**Comeback Player of the Year: Alexis Hutchins (Women's Track and Field)**

The comeback player of the year honors a student athlete who has demonstrated perseverance in the face of overcoming hardship. It is given to the player who shows perseverance in overcoming adversity from not being able to play the previous season, such as an injury, or for playing well in comparison to the previous year's performance with a good attitude and has had a positive impact on his or her team.

**Cougar Cup Award: Women's Tennis**

The Cougar Cup was established eleven years ago and is dedicated to the team that best exemplifies the four pillars of the student-athlete experience: supporting fellow student-athletes, excellence in the classroom, leadership, and community service. The team with the most overall points will be the guardians of the trophy for the upcoming year. Yet again, it was a spirited competition with teams battling to the bitter end.

**Male Athlete of the Year: Colton McKiernan (Wrestling)****Female Athlete of the Year: Matea Diekema (Women's Soccer)**

The Athlete of the Year award is presented to a student-athlete, from both the men's and women's teams, who consistently performs at a high level and leads their team to success. In other words, these are your MVPs of SIUE Cougar Athletics. Nominees and winners were voted on by the head coaches and SAAC members.

**Coach of the Year: Derek Burton (Women's Soccer)**

The Coach of the Year honors one coach on their successes. Wins and accomplishments along with noticeably excelling at their position as well as showing department support and has active community involvement. They take pride and do an outstanding job at their work and they are reliable, dependable, and efficient and have a positive impact on the student-athletes lives beyond their sport

**Staff Member of the Year: Derrick Brown (Men's Golf/Interim Athletic Director)**

The Staff member of the year will be given to the staff that noticeably excels at their job, shows department support, and Community University involvement.