

Kaitlyn Morningstar Signs Letter Of Intent With SIUE Women's Track Team, Discus Thrower Is Three-Time State Medalist

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
June 28 2023 7:49 AM



EDWARDSVILLE - Kaitlyn Morningstar, who finished on the podium three consecutive years in the IHSA Class 3A girl's discus throw, signed a letter of intent to compete on the women's track and field team at SIU-Edwardsville in a ceremony held Tuesday evening at Edwardsville High School

Morningstar recently finished third in the discus in the state meet May 12-13 at O'Brien Stadium on the campus of Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, throwing 43.79 meters to take the bronze medal in the event. She finished on the podium in both her

sophomore and junior years. Morningstar is an Edwardsville Female Athlete of the Month.



Morningstar recently visited the SIUE campus and fell in love with it almost immediately, which helped make her decision to compete for the Cougars.

"After going on a lot of visits after my senior track year, SIUE was one of the most recent ones I visited," Morningstar said in an interview following the ceremony, "and I just liked everything about it and that's how I kind of made my decision."

The SIUE campus has made many improvements in the last several decades, going from a commuter school to a full-fledged residential campus and the improvements over the decades helped cement Morningstar's decision.

"I just feel like it's very pretty," Morningstar said. "It's a very pretty campus and all of the facilities athletically, as well, I know I'm going to spend a lot of my time at, are very nice and I feel very updated. It just feels like a great place to go."

The chance to compete in the Ohio Valley Conference, a top track league in the nation, also appealed to Morningstar as well.

"Yeah, definitely the OVC is very exciting to be D-I," Morningstar said, "and the OVC's very competitive. So I'm excited for that as well."

Morningstar's major is currently undecided but is leaning toward business. She also considered Southeast Missouri State, Eastern Illinois, Western Illinois and Arkansas-Little Rock before settling on SIUE. The chance to stay home also appealed to Morningstar as well.

"Yeah, definitely," Morningstar said. "But at the same time, living on campus, I feel like it'll be really nice to get away and just kind of have that space from home and I feel like it'll be a great step."

Morningstar will be bringing much to the Cougars and will also be a great addition to the team.

"I'm definitely very proud of her," said Tigers' throws coach Jaimee Henderson, "and so excited that she was able to make her decision to the place she feels like is the best fit for her. I knew that wherever she went, she was going to do great, but I'm really happy to see her go somewhere that she felt that it was the right place and that she's going to be nice in place, close to home and still get to compete at a high, strong level."

Henderson agreed that the OVC is a very good and competitive conference in track.

"Definitely not," Henderson said. "I competed in the OVC in college; I went to Eastern Illinois University to throw. So I'm really excited to see her back into the conference I competed in myself."

Henderson also believes that Morningstar will bring a much more competitive spirit and fun to the Cougar team as well.

"You know, Kaitlyn's going to bring in, definitely, a positive attitude on a daily basis," Henderson said. "She's never done learning and she's definitely a student of her sport. So she will be someone that will learn from her teammates and also listen to her coach and really see herself improve. She's always so fun and positive and happy every day and I think they're really going to benefit from that. And also this year, she's already improved

so much from last year, that they're just going to keep seeing big numbers come from her in multiple events."

Henderson's favorite memory of Morningstar was hard to pin down, but Morningstar's fun nature will always be one of them.

"Oh my goodness, there are so many things I can mention," Henderson said with a warm smile and laugh. "I've gotten so much time with her, the amount of memories that we've made is immeasurable. I think maybe just throughout this year, she loves to dance and have fun at practice and it's been really awesome to see her interact and work with Aaliyah Covington (a Tigers' assistant coach), who was able to coach with her this year, who was one of my previous throwers 10 years ago. So some of my favorite memories of this year are just watching her and Aaliyah have fun, interact and getting to see that kind of come full circle for me."

Morningstar will bring that same sunshine to the Cougars, but don't let her fun-loving nature fool you.

"Oh, that's a great way to put it, definitely," Henderson said. "And you know, she's someone you don't want to let that fool you. She is fierce and ready to go and she's a competitor. And I think they're really going to see her come into clutch situations, score some serious points for her team and hopefully get to regionals."

And perhaps even a National Championship as well.

"That would be amazing to see," Henderson said. "I'd love to see her win that OVC championship with her teammates first and then work towards getting that NCAA level. I really think that she can do it and I'm excited to see what she does. I really think we're lucky to get her to have her local and for our upcoming throwers to have someone to look up to."

For Morningstar's part, her favorite memory of competing for the Tigers involves the podium finishes at the state meet for three consecutive years.

"I think my favorite memory will be just being on that podium for three years," Morningstar said, "and just representing Edwardsville sports. It just feels great, especially at the state level and to do it three times is amazing."

Morningstar will miss everyone who helped in her development at Edwardsville High and looks ahead to competing at the next level.

"I'll definitely miss the people for sure," Morningstar said, "because they made sports so fun for my four years here. And just being able to have grown up with them and like grown-up athletically as well with them, It just means everything to me."

She's already looking ahead to what lies down the road as well.

"Yeah, I'm so excited to see what the future has for me," Morningstar said.