

Halle Smith and Molly Sheehan Collect 21 Points Apiece, SIUE Falls to Western Illinois

by Owen Hetherington
January 2 2024 10:53 AM



EDWARDSVILLE – Western Illinois grabbed the opening two points of the contest and never trailed to down SIUE women's basketball, 81-75, on Sunday afternoon at First Community Arena. The Leathernecks took a 15-point advantage in the first, but the Cougars battled to cut their deficit to three points on three separate occasions.

SIUE Falls to 3-12 overall and 0-2 against Ohio Valley Conference opponents. Western Illinois, who is playing its inaugural season in the conference, improves to 10-2 and 1-0.

"Credit to Western Illinois, who had a really great start when we didn't," Head Coach [Samantha Quigley Smith](#) said. "We had some bright spots and had a strong fight back in a game that could've gone from a 22–25-point deficit pretty quick. We just couldn't get over the hump."

SIUE concluded the contest 27-78 from the floor (33 percent), 10-35 from three-point range, while shooting 13-19 at the free throw line. Western Illinois shot 42 percent (28-66) overall and went 17-27 at the stripe. The Leathernecks outrebounded the Cougars 52-46, but the SIUE owned a 14-11 advantage on the offensive glass, scoring 20 points on second chance opportunities.

[Halle Smith](#) commanded the Cougars on the boards and in the post, recording career highs in points (21) and rebounds (13). Six of her 13 rebounds came on the offensive end of the floor while shooting 9-11 overall and 3-6 at the charity stripe. She also contributed three blocks.

"We had a balance in scoring and great inside presence with great post looks to Halle," added Smith. "We aren't a team that is going to win a lot of games shooting 35 threes. We have to be balanced, share the basketball, and make some extra passes. We found great looks from inside tonight."

[Molly Sheehan](#) also recorded 21 points, a career best mark for the junior. All of her points came from three-point land, knocking down seven of her 13 opportunities from deep. Defensively, she led the Cougars with three of SIUE's nine steals.

"Molly was aggressive," said Smith. "We have been talking about that all year and she's now stepping into a role of not only starting but being our primary ball handler. While at the same time, looking to score. She took this one and ran with it."

SIUE forced 15 turnovers while dishing out 17 assists. [Macy Silvey](#) led SIUE with five assists.

"We did a much better job at controlling the basketball," said Smith. "I sat down with the point guards, and we had a really great film session showing them the great strides they have been making. But we also talked about unforced turnovers and how we can look to minimize them. We did a great job in our primary break of slowing down to find open teammates."

[Sofie Lowis](#) added 10 points, her fifth consecutive game in double-figures. [Ava Stoller](#) added eight while Silvey contributed seven.

"Every game we are improving," said Smith. "It's hard to feel that as a player, but their work is going to show. I encourage our players to keep their heads up, because sooner than later, one of these close games are going to go our way."

SIUE continues its conference slate at Little Rock on Thursday, Jan. 4. Tipoff is scheduled for 5:00 p.m. and will be streamed on ESPN+.

"Little Rock is historically a great defensive team, so we need to make sure we are executing," said Smith. "We are going to have to grind defensively to make things difficult on them. It's going to be a battle and we're excited for the opportunity."

Stay connected with the Cougars all season long by following @SIUEWBB on [X](#), @SIUEWBB on [Instagram](#), and SIUE Women's Basketball on [Facebook](#).