

Shamar Wright Scores 21 In 78-70 SIUE Men's Victory Over WIU

by Joe Pott

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EDWARDSVILLE – [Shamar Wright](#) collected his fourth 20-point outing this year, but SIUE dropped its first game at home this season, falling 78-70 to Western Illinois Sunday at First Community Arena.

The Cougars are 8-7 overall and now 1-1 in Ohio Valley Conference play. Western Illinois, which was playing its first game as a member of the OVC, improved to 8-6 overall.

In a game which featured 26 lead changes and 10 ties, SIUE held the lead for just over eight minutes of game time.

Western Illinois opened the game on a 6-0 run, but SIUE used back-to-back three-pointers from [Shamar Wright](#) and [Ray'Sean Taylor](#) to lead 11-8 with 16:09 to play before halftime.

[Damarco Minor](#) just missed a jumper as time expired before halftime and Western Illinois led 33-32 at the break.

The beginning of the second half played out much as the first, with the lead changing hands several times, but SIUE took its last lead with 9:27 left when [Arnas Sakenis](#) made it 53-52 with a layup after a pass over the top from Taylor.

The Cougars trailed 70-65 following two free throw from Minor with 1:14 to play, but [Ray'Sean Taylor](#) stole the inbounds pass and fed [Lamar Wright](#) for a three-pointer from the top of the key. Following two free throws by WIU's Ryan Meyers Minor again pulled SIUE within two (72-70) with 21 seconds to play, but would get no closer. Meyers and James Dent combined to go 8 for 8 at the free throw line over the game's final 35 seconds to seal the win for Western Illinois.

"When we cut it to three from five or go back to a two-point game, you have to give yourself a chance to get a rebound," SIUE Head Coach [Brian Barone](#) said.

"Unfortunately, we didn't do enough defensively down the stretch. They made some big shots and they hit their free throws."

Western Illinois outrebounded SIUE 34-22. The leading rebounding team in the OVC, the Leathernecks grabbed 13 offensive rebounds which led to 18 second-chance points.

"They attacked every time," Barone said of the WIU rebounders. "We got caught in some rotations, but that's what they do. They're one of the top rebounding teams in the country. We didn't do enough to go get it."

[Shamar Wright](#) led SIUE with a game-high 21 points. Wright now has 1,316 career points to move into sole possession of the No. 4 spot on SIUE's career scoring list.

"I came out with a mindset to be aggressive," [Shamar Wright](#) said. "Coaches have told me to embrace who I am. On both ends of the courts I need to be aggressive."

[Ray'Sean Taylor](#) scored 16 points, including 13 in the second half. Taylor now has 1,065 career points which ranks 12th on the all-time list.

Minor finished with nine points and led SIUE with seven rebounds. He added a team-high six assists. [Brian Taylor II](#) and [Lamar Wright](#) each scored eight points.

The Cougars were 25-53 (47 percent) from the field, including 8-21 (38 percent) from three-point territory. SIUE was 12-15 (80 percent) at the free throw line.

Meyers finished with 21 points for the Leathernecks. Jesiah West scored 15 points and grabbed 10 rebounds.

Western Illinois hit 55 percent (29-53) of its shots from the field and was 15 -20 (75 percent) from the free throw line.

"This was a typical OVC game," Barone added. "Teams out with a lot of emotion and a lot of fire. It came down to a one-possession game. It was an eight-point game, but it came down to one possession as they hit their free throws."

The Cougars face their first road test in OVC play when they travel to Little Rock for a Thursday matchup with the Trojans.