

SIUE Men's Basketball Overcomes 15-Point Deficit to Win on Senior Day

by Joe Pott

February 18 2024 11:29 AM



EDWARDSVILLE – SIUE men's basketball overcame a 15-point deficit on Saturday against Southeast Missouri to win its final home game of the season, 80-76 at First Community Arena.

SIUE improved its Ohio Valley Conference record to 8-6 and 15-12 overall. SEMO

slipped to 8-19 overall with a 3-11 record in the OVC. The Cougars finished with a 12-2 record at First Community Arena-the most home wins for the program since the move to Division I.

"It's a credit to what we did, we didn't hang our heads at all," SIUE Head Coach Brian Barone said. "We did a good job of changing defenses on the fly."

SEMO jumped out to an early 14-7 lead with a fastbreak layup by Marques Bryant. The Redhawks didn't slow down as they stretched their first half to 15 (32-17) on a Rob Martin jump shot.

The Cougars made up some ground, switching to a 2-3 zone with 7:30 left in the first half. SEMO would go on to make just 5 of their next 15 shots. SIUE would take advantage of an 11-2 run over the course of 3:00 to cut the lead to three (37-34).

A jump shot made by [Brian Taylor II](#) with 49 seconds left tied the game at 39 going into the halftime break; just the second time the Cougars have been tied at half under [Brian Barone](#) at SIUE.

"It's frustrating when you don't play the way you know you can play," Barone said. Then you look up at the scoreboard and it's tied"

The second half featured a similar start to the first half. The Cougars fell behind by nine (50-41) 6:00 minutes into the half yet had another fight in them. SIUE got within one (50-49) on a dunk by [Arnas Sakenis](#). [Ray'Sean Taylor](#) gave the Cougars the lead with a three-pointer with 9:51 to play.

The Cougars' biggest lead of the game came on a layup by [Arnas Sakenis](#) to make it 68-62 with 5:39 left in the game. The Redhawks used a 14-2 run, capped off by pair of free-throws by Rob Martin to get their lead back to six.

The Cougars held SEMO scoreless for the final 3:07 and finished the game on a 10-0

run. A [Shamar Wright](#) shot tied the game at 76, followed by a Minor layup with :14 seconds left to put the Cougars back on top. Minor sealed the game with a pair of free throws.

"Coach drew a play up for me and I thought that meant a lot," [Shamar Wright](#) said. "I couldn't let my team down even though I had a hard night."

[Damarco Minor](#) led the charge for the Cougars with a game-high 26 points, his fifth 20-point game of the season. Minor added eight rebounds and three assists.

[Ray'Sean Taylor](#) also contributed a 20-point game with 20 points on 6-of-11 shooting from behind the three-point arc while adding 2 points from the free-throw line.

Fifth year Senior [Lamar Wright](#) finished the game with 12 points and three rebounds. The Cougars got a big boost off the bench from [Arnas Sakenis](#) who finished with a career-high nine points and seven rebounds.

"It was a special game, and these last two home games really meant a lot to me, " [Lamar Wright](#) said. "I've met a lot of new people here throughout my five years and those relationships will stay throughout the rest of my life."

SIUE connected on 28-63 (44 percent) from the field and finished 16-22 (73 percent) from the free-throw line.

Southeast Missouri was led by Rob Martin who scored 13 points and grabbed three rebounds while recording a game high 9 assists.

The Redhawks shot 31-64 (48 percent) from the field and connected on 7-21 (33 percent) three pointers. SEMO was perfect at the line going 7-7.

The Cougars outrebounded SEMO with 36 -33.

SIUE will finish the regular season with four games on the road starting with Tennessee Tech on Thursday with tip set for 7:30

"I get on that bus with a group that I trust and believe in. We have to go out and perform, people are going to give us their best shot."