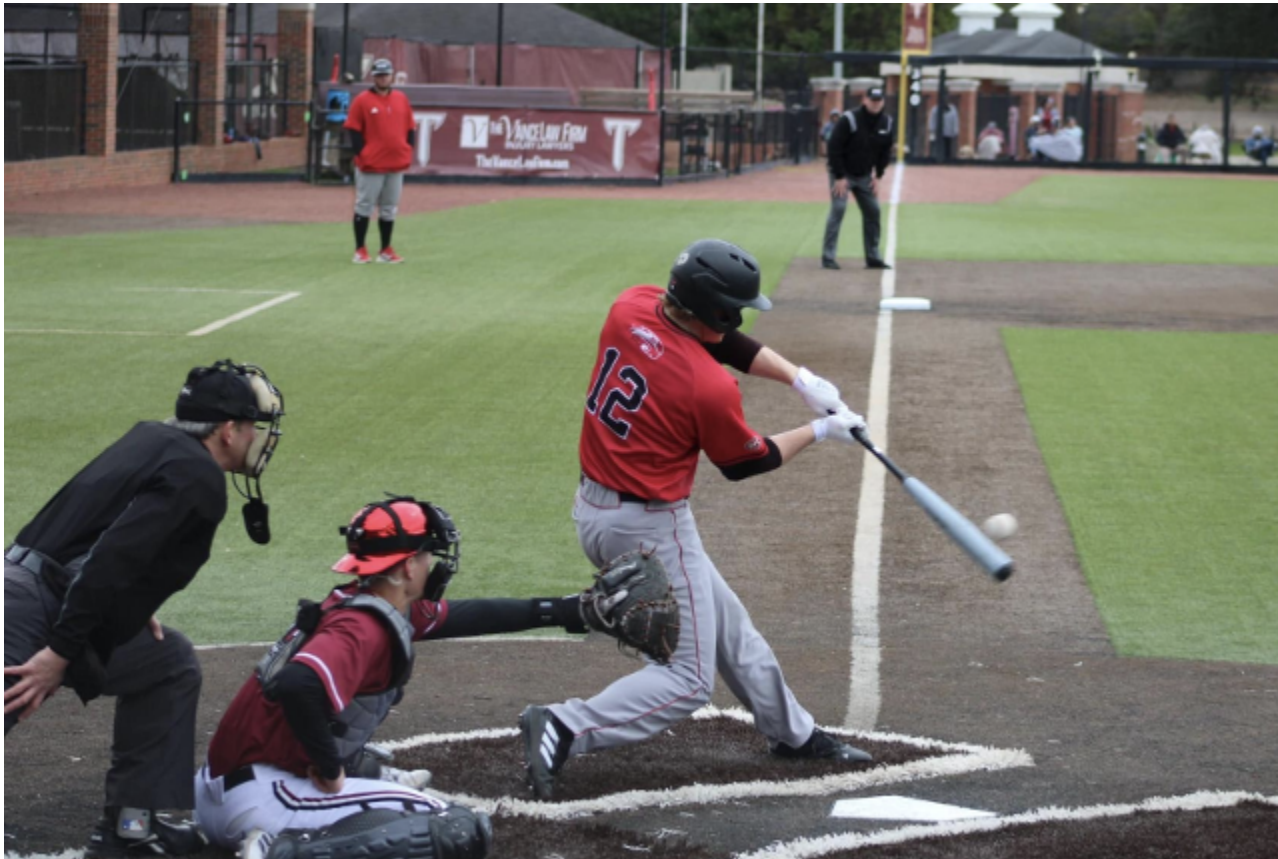


SIUE Baseball Takes Series With Saturday Win At Western Illinois

by Joe Pott

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MACOMB – SIUE baseball captured its third Ohio Valley Conference series win, knocking off Western Illinois 11-9 Saturday afternoon.

The Cougars have won four straight and improved to 8-6 in OVC play and 16-23 overall. WIU fell to 3-11 in the league and 7-27 overall.

After getting out to an early lead, the Cougars had to come back to earn the win.

"It's nice to jump out on top early," SIUE Head Coach [Sean Lyons](#) said. "But (Western Illinois) battled back. They put the pressure on us."

The Cougars used four hits to score three times in the third inning. [Gage Franck](#) provided the big blow, doubling down the left field line to score two.

The Leathernecks answered with five runs in the bottom of the inning. JR Heavlin hit a three-run home run in the inning for WIU.

The Cougars pulled a run back in the third when [Chase Bloomer](#) came in from third on a double steal attempt. [Daniel Gierer](#) was thrown out at second. SIUE took the lead back in the seventh when [Ryan Niedzwiedz](#) drove home two on a fielder's choice play at second base.

WIU tied the game again in the bottom of the seventh, before SIUE regained the lead when Bloomer doubled and later came in on a throwing error in the top of the eighth inning. [Drew Mize](#) and [Lucas Spence](#) added sacrifice flies in the inning to extend the lead out to 9-6. The Cougars would use an error and sacrifice fly to add two in the top of the ninth to lead 11-6.

The runs proved to be important as WIU scored three times in the bottom of the ninth to trim the score back to 11-9.

"We did some good things in the money innings, that's the seventh, eighth and ninth innings," Lyons said. "We battled back, got ahead and got some insurance."

[Ian Benner](#) (3-0) earned the win over four innings in relief. He allowed three earned runs and struck out three.

"[Ian Benner](#) did a nice job of the pen," Lyons said. "The runs he gave up are when we had some trouble defensively. When we had some miscues, (Western Illinois) took advantage."

[Liam McKillop](#) picked up his third save of the year, coming on in with bases loaded in the ninth inning and retiring Western Illinois to finish the game. He struck out one.

[Alex Rodriguez](#) started and allowed five runs, all unearned, over four innings.

Both teams had eight hits in the game. Nobody had more than a single hit for the Cougars. Franck and Niedzwiedz each had two RBIs.

[Lucas Spence](#) finished the game 0-2 with a pair of walks and a sacrifice fly. It is his first hitless game since March 9. His 23-game hitting streak was the longest at the Division I level for SIUE and one shy of tying the all-time school record.

The Cougars will try to earn the sweep Sunday afternoon. First pitch is set for 1 p.m.

"It's great to get the series win on the road, but the job can't be done there," Lyons said.
"We want to get that road sweep. That's how you start to make up ground."