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After hosting two Missouri Valley Conference games the first week of January, the ISU women’s basketball team returned to the Redbird Arena floor Thursday night for its first home league contest with school in session.

After a four-game winning streak for the Redbirds was halted with a loss to Creighton last Friday, ISU got back to its winning ways with a victory over Drake on Sunday. However, the Redbirds (11-6, 3-2 Missouri Valley Conference) were not able to keep the winning streak going as they fell to the Evansville Aces by the score of 71-57 Thursday night.

UE improved to 5-10 on the season and 3-1 in conference, good for third place in the MVC. The Aces now hold a half-game lead in the conference standings ahead of the Redbirds, who are in a fourth-place tie in the league.

“Before the game, I said this is not a bottom of the league Evansville team that won two games [in conference] last year,” ISU head coach Stephanie Glance said. “[The Aces] are an improved team and we knew that [going into the game].”

The Redbirds were led by senior guard Jamie Russell with 24 points, senior guard Candace Sykes with 11 points and sophomore forward Janae Smith with 10 points. The Aces outshot ISU on the evening, 45.7 percent to 35.5 percent. In addition to the shooting percentage disparity, the Redbirds were also outrebounded by UE, 37-32.

“The two things we talked about before the game to dictate the game were defense and rebounding,” Glance said. “To allow a 57.9 shooting percentage [for Evansville] in the second half was disappointing.”

The Aces were headed offensively by three double-digit scorers including sophomore forward Mallory Ladd (18 points), senior forward Samantha Heck (16 points) and sophomore guard Khristian Hart (14 points).

UE raced out to an 8-0 advantage just under four minutes into the game as ISU missed its first five shots from the floor. The Redbirds responded with a 6-2 run of their own with all of ISU’s points in the stretch coming from Smith to cut the deficit to four points at 10-6 with 12:45 left in the first half.

ISU evened up the score, 13-13 just over four minutes later and scored the next five points including a three by Russell and a bucket from freshman forward Octavia Crump to grab an 18-13 advantage with 6:36 until halftime.

The Aces went on an 8-0 run to take a 21-18 lead with 2:46 remaining in the first half. The Aces took a 25-23 lead heading into the locker room for halftime. UE opened the second half on a 7-2 run to grab a 32-25 advantage just over three minutes into the half.

ISU responded with seven consecutive points to tie the score at 32 via a bucket apiece from Russell and Smith and a three-pointer by freshman guard Alexis Foley with 15:55 left in the contest. The Aces outscored the Redbirds, 11-3 to take a 43-35 lead with 11:59 remaining in the game.

ISU went on an 8-2 run with six points from Russell and a basket by Sykes to cut its deficit to two points, 45-43.

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