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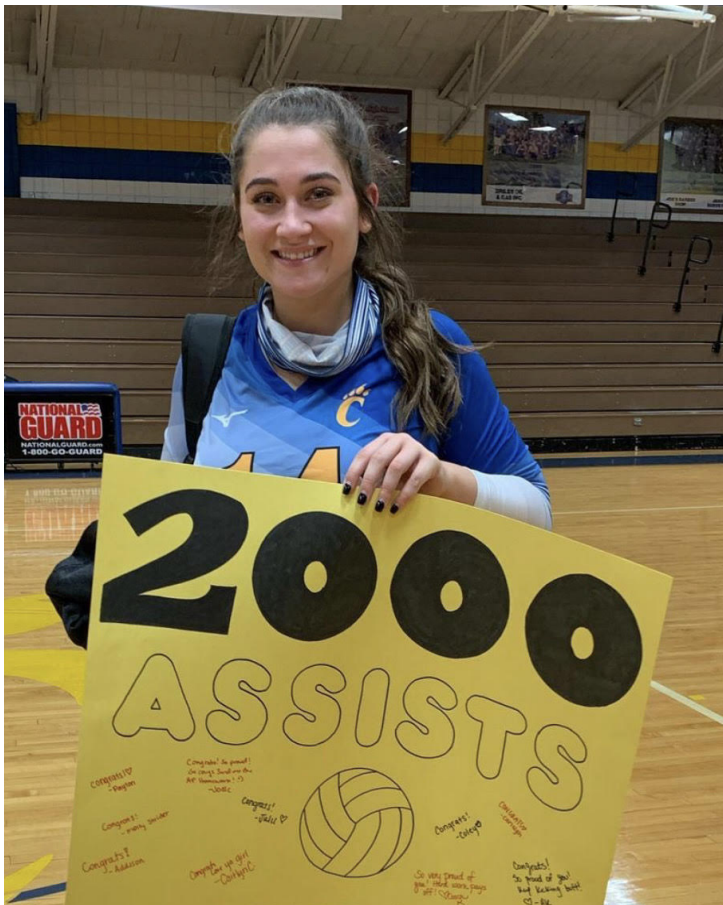
By Dennis Garcia
SportsTone.net

When the high school volleyball season ended last year, Southwestern Randolph High School's Peyton LeRoy was just 24 assists shy of 2,000 for her illustrious career. No doubt, everyone knew that she would reach that milestone very early in her senior season.

But then the pandemic hit and her senior season wasn't a sure thing anymore.

"I was upset," said LeRoy of not knowing if the season would ever start. "I really wanted to get 2,000 before I graduated."

Although delayed for three months, prep volleyball matches began last week and it didn't take long for LeRoy to reach 2,000 assists as the Cougars opened the regular and Mid-Piedmont Conference seasons with a tough setback to Southern Alamance. During that match, LeRoy recorded her 2,000th assist on a kill from Payton Shiflet.



Southwestern Randolph's Peyton LeRoy. Image provided.

"I was glad we were able to play at least that one game before we might have stopped," said LeRoy, a 5-4, four-year performer for the Cougars. "We didn't play our best that day, but we did play better and better as we went on. My freshman year, I didn't think I would get that many assists. A lot of people don't get to 1,000 and I got to 2,000. But I really wasn't thinking about it because we were losing."

The Cougars haven't lost much with LeRoy as the team's setter. SWR was 66-16 during LeRoy's first three years as the setter and 1-1 this season. In MPC play, the Cougars are an impressive 30-8.

"She plays with a lot of energy and grit that's hard to find, something you can't teach" SWR coach Darby Kennedy said. "Her competitiveness is unmatched by most people."

Like a pitcher in baseball, a quarterback in football and a point guard in basketball,

LeRoy relishes the importance of the setter position in volleyball.

"I like it because I like controlling what's going on," LeRoy said. "It comes with a lot of responsibility."

And she's been handling that responsibility very well. "What sets her apart from other setters is she has an IQ for the game," Kennedy said. "She has developed herself to someone who is very versatile and can think on her toes. With having her, I know I can spend more time making sure our first-ball contact is good so we can utilize her the best we can. She's also a great mentor for younger setters. She is a good leader for our program. She is not only developing herself, but she's also developing our younger setters for the future of this program."

Because of the virus, LeRoy wasn't able to touch a volleyball until tryouts in early November. She said it won't take long for her to get her timing back.

"I've played with a lot of girls since middle school," said LeRoy, whose mother has coached her in Junior Olympic volleyball when she was younger. "I've played with them and connected with them. Every hitter likes it differently. I have to know who is going to get it, but I have to be ready to change. This year has been harder. It will take a week or so to get that timing down."

LeRoy said she has played with a lot of great hitters during her SWR career, including Shiflet, Meredith Smith and Anna Kate Scheibel.

"I love playing volleyball," she said.

It shows.



Peyton LeRoy sets the ball for a teammate against Southern Alamance. Image provided.