



SPECIAL FEATURE

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To have a successful volleyball season, teams need to develop more than one strong hitter at the net, possess a setter who can utilize a specific system to near-perfection and a defense which allows the setter to get into that offensive scheme.

But successful teams also need a player who can step in and act as the team's "quarterback." She sees things on the floor during play and relays what she sees to teammates in order to utilize strengths and take advantage of opponents' weaknesses.

She is the team's libero and for Asheboro High School that is senior Taylor Hildreth and Hildreth plays an integral part of every Blue Comets' match.

"She's one of those who really works hard in practice," said veteran Blue Comets coach Karen Blanchard. "She's really sincere with everything she does. She plays a big role in every game because of her defense and her communication with the players. She calls the plays, lets the offense know where it should be going. She tells you where the spots are open on the floor. Taylor has stepped up her leadership this year. She works very well with this group."

Asheboro is currently 2-1 on the season, both in the Mid-Piedmont Conference and overall. The Blue Comets opened with a win over Southeast Guilford, dropped a match to powerful Southern Alamance and then dusted off Eastern Guilford in straight sets. The Blue Comets are back in action Tuesday against Williams before traveling to Southwestern Randolph Thursday for a rivalry battle with the Cougars.

If the Blue Comets are going to be successful, Hildreth is going to have to shine on the court.

"I like reading defenses, that has always been my favorite part," said Hildreth, who has been playing volleyball since age 10. "Being able to read and communicate with the hitters and setters.

"I am responsible for the other side of the court and conveying that to our hitters," she added. "I talk with my back row to make sure we are in position."



Asheboro's Taylor Hildreth. Photo provided.

Hildreth's position means she must make split-second decisions. Getting to know her teammates strengths is crucial.



Blue Comets senior Taylor Hildreth. Photo provided.

where being versatile is so important.

"You have to know how to play different places and Taylor will set in practice, hit, play wherever I need her to play for the team. She has done a great job."

Hildreth is certainly playing an important role in this very unusual season as the Blue Comets look to contend for a league championship.

"The chemistry is different each year and you have to figure out how to bond with each setter," Hildreth said. "You have to communicate, and hanging out with your teammates after practice helps. We've always been able to come together on the court, but that changes year to year. Sometimes when you make those decisions on the floor, you have to go with your gut."

The NCHSAA recently mandated that all players wear masks during matches. This makes communicating a bit more difficult. It has taken time to get used to.

"It's a lot hotter in the gym and communication is more difficult with a mask," Hildreth said. "It's a huge barrier for that. I didn't realize at first how big of an issue it was."

But Hildreth and the Blue Comets are becoming more used to it.

Hildreth has shown versatility during these times