

January 2, 2026

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SportsTone.net

ASHEBORO - Discovering new things and going to new places.

Asheboro High School's Tiphaine Amberny, a senior foreign exchange student from Pornik, France, said discovering new things and going to new places are among her favorite experiences in life. It would be hard to believe what she is experiencing now isn't at the very top of her list.

Amberny, who is nearly 4,200 miles from home, has not only traveled to Asheboro for her final year of high school, but since she's played basketball "ever since I can remember," she has joined the Blue Comets girls varsity basketball team, where she has made a positive impact on her team and with her coaches.

"Tiphaine (pronounced Tiffon) has become a big piece of what we do," first-year AHS head coach Wes Luther said. "She doesn't necessarily do a ton of scoring, but she's solid defensively, she's getting more aggressive, and she's adapted to the style of play here. That's been a process for her."

School, of course, is different in France, with classes and clubs not ending until 6 p.m. each night. Taking classes like weight training and Yearbook are not options in France but Amberny is taking advantage of them while here.

"I came here to learn English," said Amberny, who has helped the Blue Comets to a 9-5 record after finishing as runner-ups at the SportsTone.net Christmas Invitational.

"When I came here, my English was bad and it's still not good. But I'm here to improve."

On the contrary, Amberny's English is impressive as she continues to make her way in a new culture, a new country, a new school and adjust to a different style of basketball. Basketball, she said, is different in France. Although the goal is to win, there is just as much emphasis on having fun. The game is a bit harder here, she said, with a few minor rule changes. In France, timeouts can only be called on dead balls and not while play is underway and the teams sit on the side they are shooting at to begin the game.



*Asheboro senior Tiphaine Amberny.*



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"I don't remember life without basketball," Amberny said, adding both her parents played the game for a long time. "I don't know when I started, but I always played."

Basketball is just part of the transition for Amberny.

"I couldn't imagine being away from my family and my friends that long and adjusting to a whole new culture, place, country, game," Luther said. "Adjusting to the basketball game is a small thing compared to what they both have had to adapt to in a whole different country."

The "they" Luther referred to is Amberny and fellow exchange student Lucia Juarez, who is from Spain.

Luther admits sometimes there is a language barrier.

"Sometimes understanding me is tough, I talk fast and teach fast and sometimes I have to realize I have to slow down a little so they both can understand me," Luther said. "They've adjusted well."

Amberny said the team has made her feel at home.

"After we had the tryouts and I knew who was on the team, I started to know more people," Amberny said. They are really (welcoming). They try to include us and they are all really nice."

Amberny said prospective foreign-exchange students are chosen by the host family and the student could be placed anywhere. With two brothers in France, she said she is very fortunate where she was placed. Amberny is staying with a host family that includes two young girls.

"I love them, they are always playing with us," Amberny said. "I always wanted a sister and now I have sisters."

Asheboro is quite different from Pornic. Pornic is a historic seaside resort on France's Atlantic Jade Coast known for its picturesque old port with fishing boats, a medieval chateau, sandy beaches, rocky coves and coastal paths.

Amberny said she loves discovering new things and going to new places. She's experiencing that nearly every day in Asheboro.