

September 27, 2024

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SportsTone.net

ASHEBORO - Veteran Asheboro High School tennis coach Jay Moore likes to use a "yogi-izm" when discussing tennis, an endearing saying from baseball great Yogi Berra. Although Berra used the saying to sum up baseball, he certainly could have been talking about high school tennis. And although it may not be exactly what Berra said, the meaning is clear.

"High School tennis is 50 percent talent and 90 percent mental," Moore has said time and time again.

AHS senior Blair Thomas has taken that to heart and after adjusting her mental approach, is enjoying another fantastic season for the Blue Comets on the tennis courts.

"You have to have a strong mindset to win," Thomas said, adding that has been one of her most improved characteristics from her freshman season. "Your mental game can help you lose the whole match and it can put a lot of doubt into you. It can keep you from making plays you know you should be making."

How has she improved in that area?

"Every time before I serve or return a serve, I tell myself this point matters," she said. "My confidence has grown."

Thomas, who has played No.1 singles for the past two years, is 11-1 overall in singles play as she works toward a berth into the regional tournament and then the state 3-A championships. She was a state qualifier last season, falling in the opening round, and hopes to return in her senior season. The Blue Comets are scheduled to play three matches next week as the Mid-Piedmont Conference season winds down. The MPC Tournament begins Oct. 7

"Her strengths are keeping the ball in play and not overthinking," Moore said of his senior, who was 10-1 in singles play as a junior. "Her serve is better, she's stronger and she's more patient. The first couple of years, she got impatient and got down on herself. At the high school level, if you can see someone who has that mental fortitude



Asheboro High School tennis coach Jay Moore. Photo provided.

of, 'I lost that point, let's go get the next one,' you're going to be successful. She learned that."



Senior Blair Thomas holds down the #1 spot in the Asheboro tennis lineup. Photo provided.

Thomas was thrust into high-level play as a freshman playing No. 2. She was No. 2 as a sophomore and elevated to No. 1 for her final two prep seasons.

"I would say the difference is when you're No. 1 there's more pressure, like you have to win for the team," Thomas said. "It makes me nervous sometimes. Everyone is looking at you, but they are being supportive."

Thomas qualified for the regionals in doubles as a sophomore and singles as a junior.

Unlike some top high school players, Thomas has not gone the tournament route. She played in only one last summer in preparation for her senior year, instead opting to go to clinics, work out and practice under Ricky McElreath.

"Most of her development," Moore said, has come at the high school level."

With the regular season ending, Thomas turns her attention toward postseason action.

"My goal is to make it back to the state tournament," she said. "I learned that you have to fight for it, you have to want it. It's not going to be easy. It's going to be a battle."

Thomas has never shied away from that.