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Sports

## Emerald Point Guard Focuses Solely On Basketball

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Emerald's Rahmad Strong doesn't play multiple sports so he can focus on basketball. Strong is slated to start at point guard this season for the Vikings. (Staff photo by T.M. James)

Most high school student-athletes choose to fill out the year playing a number of different sports, but Emerald High School boys basketball player Rahmad Strong has taken a different route. He's all basketball, all the time and with several players gone from last year's Region 3-AA championship team, Strong will be the Vikings' most reliable and proven offensive threat when the season begins Tuesday at Ninety Six.

Strong played football when he was younger but he now focuses solely on basketball and has no regrets about that decision. "All I can say is I know I'm more ready (for basketball) because I've been waiting on this moment," Strong said. "You feel like you're waiting for a long time."

Emerald coach Robin Scott doesn't question Strong's decision to only play basketball, but he does say most student-athletes benefit from playing multiple sports. "I think anybody that plays more sports is going to be more well-rounded," Scott said. "(Rahmad) works at basketball and that makes him a good basketball player, but I don't think not playing other sports helps him."

Strong has bided his time waiting for basketball season to start by practicing with teammates who don't play other sports, in particular football in the fall. "I've been working with Ryan Tracy a lot because he doesn't play football either," Strong said. "Me and him have been working together this summer. "I feel like I'm more focused than I was last year."

Focusing on basketball has certainly made Strong an effective player. He came off the bench for the Vikings much of last season, but he was also a consistent weapon and an asset for Emerald late in close games. Against McCormick last season in the Vikings' final game at their old gymnasium, Strong hit a crucial 3-pointer and picked up a steal to help Emerald earn a 54-51 overtime win.

Strong's ability to shoot effectively doesn't mean he's a selfish ball-handler. "He's always

looking to take the ball to the basket if there's an opening where he can take that seam," Scott said. "If there's not, he's always looking to hit the open man."

With All-Region players Trey Woolridge and Ben McIntosh gone, the Vikings are relying on Strong to score and find opportunities for his teammates at point guard. "He was our leading scorer in a bunch of games last year, so he realizes that he's got to be the team leader, being the point guard anyway," Strong said. "At the point guard spot, you're going to get points when they are there for you and he's smart enough that he can create opportunities for himself."

Strong is fairly confident that he has enough guys around him to take off some of the heat. "I don't feel like it's a lot of pressure because we've got a lot of people that can take over," Strong said.