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Sports

Emerald Senior Changes Position In Effort To Boost Emerald Girls Soccer

By KEVIN FIORENZO/ kfiorenzo@indexjournal.com

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EMERALD'S LINDSEY WILL (Staff photo by Kevin Fiorenzo)

The class of Region 3-AA and a state playoffs participant a year ago, Emerald High School's girls soccer team was limited at times by its lack of consistent offense. On the heels of a position change and the departure of five seniors, Vikings right wing Lindsey Will is expected to be called upon to generate scoring and provide much needed experience.

Will is one of only three seniors on a team that saw its entire defense graduate following a second round exit in the Class AA playoffs. That experience will come in handy since Will is one of the few players capable of consistently playing every minute of a game. "It's important for the continuity of the game," Emerald coach Allen Bishop said. "Especially this year because we replaced seven starters and most of that was with freshmen. We're very young and to have a steady senior out there for the full game (is important)."

Last year, Will was a midfielder for Emerald, but standout right wing Caroline Callison opted not to play this season, so Will transitioned to the new position. Developing the endurance to play the role was never an issue for Will. "I usually run like two miles every day in my neighborhood," Will said. "For the position I play, which is wing, you have to be up and down the field, so you have to be really prepared for the running. "I've kind of always been like that. I try to keep in shape."

On top of being on the field every minute, playing right wing puts Will in one of the team's most active positions. "We require a lot of running out of our wings," Bishop said. "We play our wings up and back so they have offensive and defensive responsibilities. "They can never get beat back by the ball so they may be all the way down and have to turn and sprint back down the field."

Will first began playing soccer at age 4 when her parents signed her up for a youth league, and she started getting serious about the game when she was in middle school. She didn't begin playing for the Lakelands Toros until last year, but playing year-round has gone a long way toward keeping her in shape. "I've only done it for two years, but it does give you more experience and playing time as opposed to having that time off," Will said.

With the competition the Vikings face in moving to Region 1-AA and playing a number of top teams in the state, having that experience is a benefit. "When you really look at running three to four miles in a game the way she plays you have to be in great physical shape," Bishop said. "We've got some girls

that don't play club ball, and they get tired fast and they have a hard time bringing their game up to the level we're going to have to play if we're going to be able to compete with Woodruff and Christ Church."

The Vikings will have to create some offense along the way, and Will said Emerald is working toward that goal. "For some reason (last year), we just couldn't score. I don't know why," Will said. "We've just been practicing, like shooting and stuff. We're just trying to work on getting the ball in the net."