

# THE INDEX-JOURNAL

Sports

## Vikings Conquer Walhalla

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Emerald's Sarah Seigler returns the ball during her match Tuesday at Greenwood Country Club. (Staff photo by T.M. James)

Considering the schedule it faces over the next few days, the Emerald High School girls tennis team needed a relatively no-stress victory to start out the week. The Vikings closed out their undefeated Region 1-AA slate with a 6-1 victory over Walhalla on Tuesday at Greenwood Country Club. The victory improved Emerald's record to a perfect 8-0 and locked up a top seed for the Vikings when the Class AA playoffs begin on Oct. 30.

Before it begins postseason play, though, Emerald will have to follow up Tuesday's victory with two matches against the strongest teams on its schedule. The Vikings are on the road today against Class AAAA T.L. Hanna, which Emerald defeated 4-3 earlier this year, but benefited from three of the Yellow Jackets' top players being out because of illness. On Thursday, the Vikings will face Class AAA Clinton, which Emerald defeated 4-3 in its first match of the season. "(Today) and Thursday are just going to be so stressful," Emerald coach

Susan Timmerman said. "This is a good thing to go in today and get ready for the playoffs."

Emerald once again showed why it's head and shoulders above region opponents with a commanding win Tuesday. The Vikings won all of their singles matches in straight sets, and the only slip-up overall came at No. 1 doubles, where Emerald's Sammie Jo Manning and Julianne Welch, playing up from No. 2 doubles, fell 7-5, 6-1 to the Razorbacks' Liz Baker and Kendall Bryan.

Having decided to bump up her No. 2 and No. 3 doubles teams a spot, Timmerman was pleased to get those players some added experience, but she stressed they still have a lot to work on in doubles. "We need work on a couple of things. We need to work on our approach shots, I think, with our doubles players," Timmerman said. "But I think putting my No. 2 doubles team at No. 1 gave them some good experience going into the playoffs, when they'll get a better caliber of player."

Emerald's No. 2 team of Brenda Collins and Catie Collins won the first set of its match 6-2, but dropped the second 3-6 before coming back to take the third-set supertiebreaker, 10-8. Manning and Welch managed to keep their match on serve in the first set before falling 7-5 and then were overwhelmed in the second, dropping that set 6-1.

All of the Vikings' singles players moved through their matches without dropping a set, but No. 5 Maggie Elliott struggled in her first set before pulling it out, 7-5. She won the second set without dropping a game. "Second set, I played a little bit better and started figuring out where to hit the ball," Elliott said.

Timmerman thought the team's busy week of matches, combined with an equally hectic week at school, might have caused some distraction on the court. "Maggie was sluggish starting out. I don't know what was going on," Timmerman said. "(But) they've all got a lot going on -- they're taking PSAT's this week, school work and

homecoming -- so these girls are multi-taskers and super-focused right now. "I think Maggie might have had her mind on other things."

Elliott played all of last season at No. 2 doubles with Smith, and said playing singles wasn't too much of a transition aside from the fact she's now facing higher-quality opponents. "The other team's players, in singles, they hit stronger and know a little bit more about the game," Elliott said.