

# THE INDEX-JOURNAL

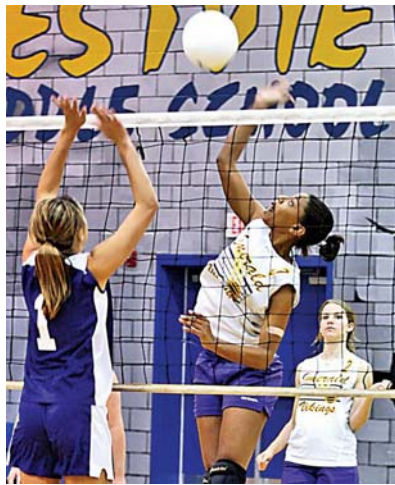
## Sports

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### Vikings Roll to 2nd Straight Win

By KEVIN FIORENZO/Index-Journal sports writer

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Emerald's Kristen Sargent, right, attempts a kill Wednesday during a non-region volleyball match against Saluda at Westview Middle School. (Staff photo by T.M. James)

Late in Emerald High School's volleyball team's four-game win over Saluda on Wednesday at Westside Middle School, Vikings setter Amber Green attacked a shot and called out the name of her teammate, Juhi Srivastava, to apparently signify she would pass the ball to her.

Instead, Green hit the ball over the net herself for a kill and smiled widely following the point, signifying that Emerald now has the confidence to execute on those points that require a bit of forethought.

That assurance in themselves led the Vikings to a 25-16, 15-25, 28-26, 25-20 win over the Tigers and gave them their second straight win after defeating Abbeville in five games Tuesday.

After dropping its opening six matches of the season, Emerald now appears to have slightly righted the ship. "They are executing on those things and they didn't get down on themselves when they hit the ball into the net," Emerald coach Sherri Tommie said. "That helps tremendously."

The Vikings trailed throughout the second game and Saluda managed to tie the match at one game apiece, but the major turning point in Emerald's favor came in the third game.

Emerald got out to a quick 5-0 lead, but Saluda managed to climb back thanks to some stronger play on offense from the Tigers. Saluda took a 19-15 lead before Emerald rallied and tied the game at 23. The two teams traded the lead for several points before the Tigers' Kim Springs missed on a kill attempt to give Emerald the 28-26 win and a two-game lead. "We were strong the first game, but we got sluggish in the second game and started sluggish in the third," Tommie said. "Sometimes that comes with playing two games, two nights back-to-

back. "I think they're ready for it because all the other games we've played up to this point have been four or five games"

Emerald led throughout the fourth game and was ahead by as much as six points as the Tigers quickly faded. The Vikings closed out the match on back-to-back points with a kill by Green and an ace from Julie Benefield. "It feels good," Benefield said. "We're on a path of revenge right now for all the losses we've had, so we're going to start winning our next games."

Benefield and Green had a combined 48 assists Wednesday, as the Vikings had one of their strongest collective efforts. Green also had 10 spikes, five digs and three blocks, while Benefield had six spikes and three digs. "Our biggest improvement is communication, moving on the court and teamwork," Tommie said. "Those things are a big key in volleyball, like calling the ball and not waiting for it to come to you."

Saluda coach Jeanette Wilder was disappointed that her team was unable to string together points successfully or playing aggressively on offense. "We're just inconsistent. That's our problem," Wilder said. "Their servers are pretty good, and we're bad at passing, so that's a bad combination. "Just bad passing -- we're not running any offense. We were playing defense pretty much the entire game."

Even with the strides Emerald has made, Tommie would like to see that extend for an entire match. "Communication and footwork from the beginning (is important)," Tommie said.