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Vikings' Seigler Best Of The Best

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SARAH SEIGLER (Staff file photo by Scott J. Bryan)

As the coach for the Emerald High School girls tennis team, Susan Timmerman has confessed on numerous occasions that she has to do very little actual coaching when it comes to eliciting strong performances from her players.

That's especially true for her No. 1 singles and doubles player, junior Sarah Seigler. Seigler, the All-Lakelands girls tennis player of the year, has had arguably the most difficult role in the Vikings' lineup, facing the strongest player from every team in each match.

Seigler isn't the type to get weighted down under pressure though, and her composure helped her lead Emerald through an undefeated Region 1-AA season and to a second-straight trip to the Class AA state finals, where the Vikings once again fell to Bishop England. Though she went just 7-7 in singles this season, Seigler hasn't grown frustrated and is, win or lose, the Vikings most even-

keeled player on the court. "I think maybe her maturity (makes her stand out)," Timmerman said. "She's kind of a wise woman to be so young and she doesn't lose her cool. "Her temperament is very well-suited to tennis."

Seigler has been Emerald's top player for the past two years and is used to having to keep her head up against talented opponents. "I feel like I've gotten a lot better since last year and our team has gotten stronger," Seigler said. "I've tried to improve a lot on my consistency and placement. "My mental game has also gotten a lot better as I've gotten older."

Along with Seigler, every player from the Vikings starting roster will be returning next season when Emerald will be favorites to capture a state title on their third try. Timmerman believes that Seigler's game has improved progressively with the heavy competition she faces in each match. After dropping her season-opening match to Clinton, Seigler went on to win six of her next eight matches. "It helped her build her different shots up and build a catalog that she can pick from," Timmerman said. "She places the ball really well and she just has determination."

Seigler first began playing tennis at age 4 but it wasn't until she was 10 that she began playing tournaments and then another three years before she started training heavily.

She began playing USTA tournaments in high school, which forced her to sacrifice free-time that would've otherwise consumed her weekends. Seigler still plays in USTA junior events primarily outside of the high school season and she is currently ranked No. 29 in the South Carolina girls 16 and under division. "It is (tough) because every once in a while I won't be free on the weekends, but I have a lot of friends on the road from other tournaments," Seigler said.

She's used to facing intense competition, but it isn't always easy for Seigler to have to struggle in the majority of her matches while her teammates sometimes coast. "It is really tough because I can feel my friends are winning and I'm the only one losing, so it's tough." As trying as playing in the top spot is sometimes, Seigler continues to get back up. "She looks at it as a challenge and she loves a challenge," Timmerman said.