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Taylor is county's top hitter

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In a split second, Emilee Taylor can dissect where she needs the ball to go.

As she elevates at the volleyball net, Armwood High's 5-foot-11-inch senior outside hitter analyzes the opponent's defense.

More often than not, she's successful with her swing.

"I can see the block," Taylor said. "I see what's open. You have to see where they leave it open for you. You can split the block."

For the first six weeks of this season, Taylor has owned the highest kills per game average in Hillsborough County with 5.3. In the time, she's also led her team in four categories - kills, blocks, aces and digs. As a junior, she finished the season with a team-high 205 kills.

"She's the total package," Armwood head volleyball coach Mike Wyatt said. "She's one of the best leaders I've ever had. Her skill is just outstanding. She the best outside hitter I've had here."

Wyatt said Taylor's athleticism enables her to make plays most can't. Taylor is also a member of the school's varsity track and field team, competing in the 4x4 relay, high jump and 200 meter hurdles. Her career best in the high jump is 4 feet, 10 inches.

"She's a great leaper," he said. "She has good timing and she makes good adjustments to the ball. Some of her sets aren't perfect, and I don't know how she does it, but she controls her body in the air."

"I think I'm a power player," said Taylor, who also owns a 3.0 grade point average. "I like playing the back row" also.

During a district match against Durant on Oct. 8, which Armwood won in five games, 3-2, Taylor posted season-high marks with 25 kills, 13 digs and six blocks.

"I'm not one to brag, but I did pretty good that game," she said.

"She never came off the court," Wyatt said. "She had four or five kills in the fifth game. She brought everything."

Taylor is in her third varsity season at Armwood. Each season, she's started as outside hitter. As a sophomore, she helped the Hawks reach the Class 5A state regional playoffs.

"I think I've really improved," she said. "I've learned so much with Armwood volleyball. My first year on varsity, I was scared and timid. Now, I'm more confident. I feel like I've gotten stronger. I

notice myself placing the ball, not just hitting it. I've gotten better with doing that."

Taylor said she's matured as a competitor.

"If I did something bad, I would just get down on myself," she said. "I'm always a positive player (now). I can shake it off."

"She's been a great mentor for the younger girls," Wyatt said.

Taylor hopes she'll receive an athletic scholarship to play for a major college program. So far, South Florida Community College has offered.

"I wouldn't be where I am without my parents and my track coach and volleyball coach helping me," she said.