



PHOTO BY ADRIAN ETHERIDGE

Freshman Emily Sidor from Rockledge, Florida, lunges to return the ball. Sidor plays singles and doubles for the Bulldogs and is 13-9 this season.

UNCA women's tennis team sees big improvements from last season

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Freshman Emily Sidor is alone with her opponent on the Campbell University home court.

She can sense the excitement in the air, her teammates' cheers echoing through her ears, giving her the confidence to clinch the match for the Bulldogs.

The UNC Asheville women's tennis team had never beaten their rival, Campbell, in the history of the program until this 4-3 victory.

"It was a super, super close match and I ended up winning it, and the whole time the team was cheering and going crazy," said Sidor, a health and wellness student from Rockledge, Florida. "It just felt really good to have the team behind me and knowing I had won that match and that it had really helped us to win as a team."

Sidor, who graduated high school

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early to join the UNCA tennis team, won the Big South Freshman of the Week award for her efforts in this match. She previously received the award for another impressive performance against Kennesaw State.

The Bulldogs started their season strong, paving a path for a successful

2017 season with a total record of 9-8. However, this was not without learning from their mistakes in previous seasons and making positive alterations to their training.

Madeline Finley, a sophomore new media and art student from Hickory, said the team experienced a lot of injuries last season and that it was clear something had to change.

"This year we had a special trainer come and teach us how to lift weights properly, so that we can protect our bodies. Then we saw a dietitian," Finley said.

Sophomore Kylee Shipley, a management student from Palm Spring Gardens, Florida, said the team is overall much healthier than last season and it clearly shows in their performances.

Finley said the combination of the new training plan and the high-energy atmosphere of the team pushed its performance forward.

"We have a good time all the time," Finley said. "Even if we lose a match,

even if we play our worst, we will still come off the court and maybe be bummed for a little bit and think about what we could do better, but then we're right back in it, listening to music and having a good time."

Sidor, who only ever played individually before coming to UNCA, said she loves the team atmosphere.

"We try and be as loud as possible at matches, we try and bring the energy and have it so our team is louder than the other teams. Most of the time we are," Sidor said. "I don't think it gets in our opponents heads so much but it for sure gets in our heads and helps us be better and be more into the match."

Finley said the team does not concern itself with the scoreboard, instead, they each put their energy into the team by fulfilling their roles and supporting one another.

"The end result is never the goal, it's always taking care of what you need to do on the court and supporting your teammates," Finley said.