

Sometimes all it takes is a little prodding.

Looking back, Megan Neeb probably would say “a little” isn’t the right way to describe the way her friends encouraged her to play volleyball in the seventh grade. You can’t blame those friends, though, because they saw in Neeb, who is now 5-foot-10, a future outside hitter who could deliver devastating kills and blocks at the net.

Neeb couldn’t help but smile when she talked about her journey from “scared” player to confident leader Tuesday morning. After all, those friends turned out to be right, and many of them were on hand with family members to watch as Neeb signed to continue her volleyball career at Mississippi University for Women.

“I think it will be a different pace of volleyball,” Neeb said. “It definitely will be faster, but I am excited. I am glad I will have a good coach (Halee Hensley) who knows me.”

New Hope High coach Allison Woolbright said Neeb’s talent and potential was evident from her first days on the middle school team. She said Neeb used to be shy, and while she may not be as loud today as other players on the court, Woolbright said Neeb has blossomed into a leader and someone with a louder voice.

“She always has had the natural athleticism for volleyball,” Woolbright said. “Then she fell in love with it, which contributed to her being successful.”

This past season, Neeb played a key role as outside hitter in New Hope’s run to the semifinals of the Mississippi High School Activities Association (MHSAA) Class 5A tournament. She also proved to be an effective server, leading the team in aces.

New Hope High assistant volleyball coach Lissette Neeb-Zemola said her daughter took to volleyball “like a fish takes to water” and that the sport came “naturally” to her. In the process, Neeb-Zemola said Megan grew more confident.

“She spent every waking moment outside of school with a volleyball in her hands so she could get better,” Neeb-Zemola said. “She was very focused on making herself better and would be pretty hard on herself if she felt it wasn’t ‘just right’.”

Neeb plans to study kinesiology at The W and hopes to pursue a career in occupational therapy. She credits the support she received from her coaches for helping her grow and be a “better person”. With each year, she said her love for the sport grew, which motivated her to play club volleyball with Level Elite. That connection figures to get stronger considering Neeb’s club coach, Hensley, will be her coach at The W.

Woolbright believes The W is an ideal fit for Neeb. She is excited to have another former player go to college in Columbus so she can continue to watch her grow.

Neeb also anticipates taking her game to another level. She admits she has matured from being “super shy” when she was younger to someone who becomes a “whole different person” when she steps on the court.

It’s difficult to know if some of Neeb’s friends saw that in her when she was younger. But there is no doubt they were spot on for pestering her to play volleyball.

“I was always told my whole life to play it and I would enjoy it, and I ended up liking it,” Neeb said.