

# Simply the best

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## Thank goodness for offseason volleyball.

That's the view of Lawrence star Jadith Lorenzo. It has nothing to do with her continued improvement on the court, although that has been considerable. It's been more her language skills.

Lorenzo, a senior setter and two-year Eagle-Tribune All-Star, was already an accomplished player when she joined the Lawrence program as a freshman, just days after moving to the city from the Dominican Republic to join her mother, who had relocated five years earlier.

"I didn't know her, but when she came in the gym, the girls cheered because they knew how good she was," said Lawrence coach Bill Brouder. "She had been in Lawrence during the summer the year before, and she was obviously talented."

There was only one problem. Lorenzo knew virtually no English.

"I couldn't talk to her at all," said Brouder. "I had to have another girl talk to her and translate. As far as her English, out of 10, she was a 1."

Lorenzo remembers those days with some lament.

"It was really hard," she said. "I had to have one of my friends translate. I knew hardly any (English). I had to take a special English class and, when I played volleyball, I just spoke Spanish. All the girls on the team knew it."

It wasn't until Lorenzo began playing for the offseason Latitude 42 club out of Salem, N.H., that her English skills began to pick up.

"That helped me so much because when I went to Latitude, the girls just knew English, so I had to pick it up," said Lorenzo. "It was the only place where there was only English (spoken)."

Andover High coach George Sullivan, who also coached Lorenzo on Latitude, was not surprised at how she began picking up the language.

"She is a great kid who works very hard, and the kids liked her and started doing a lot of things together," said Sullivan. "I think the close relationship they developed really helped."

And now, there is no problem at all for either Lorenzo or Brouder.



"If she was a 1 out of 10 before, I'd say she's at least a 7 1/2 now, and her confidence is so much greater," said Brouder. "When she was a freshman, she was only 13. Now she's 16 going on 20."

Volleyball-wise, Lorenzo — who began playing in the Dominican when she was 6-years-old — was already talented beyond her years as a freshman.

She's only gotten better.

"She has the best hands of any setter I've had since (All-Scholastic and 1993 Eagle-Tribune Player of the Year) Jeannie Tamayo) and she's the best all-around player I've ever had and ever will have," said Brouder, now in his 25th year as head coach.

Despite being the designated setter, the 5-foot-8 Lorenzo often leads the team in every category. She averages more than 20 assists, digs and service points per game as well as 15 or more kills.

"And she is 100 percent of service receiving," claims Brouder. "I use a two-man service receive system and she gets 70 to 80 percent of the balls.

"Her jump serve is incredible. When she jump serves, you feel sorry for the other team."

Sullivan is in agreement.

"It's hard, it moves like a knuckler, it's well-placed — it's just extremely hard to handle," said Sullivan. "Setting is her thing, and she's one of the best if not the best setter I've ever had. She can do it all."

That versatility should help Lorenzo's college prospects. She's been contacted by Division 1 schools, including Syracuse and Boston College, as well as numerous Division 2 and Division 3 schools.

"Syracuse wants her for a libero (defensive specialist)," said Brouder. "They already gave a scholarship for a setter, but I guarantee that if Jadith goes there, she'll beat her out and be the team's setter."

She just knows she wants to go to a good college and play volleyball. The sport has already done so much for her and she knows it can do more.

"When I was in the eighth grade, I wasn't sure I wanted to come here," said Lorenzo, a returning All-Scholastic. "When I'd come to visit in the summer, I didn't like it very much and I thought I'd probably rather keep living (in the Dominican Republic) with my brother and father.

"But I realized I'd have more chances here and, through volleyball, I learned English better and I started feeling more comfortable. Now I'm happy I came here."

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