

Hope Pawlik Achieves New Milestone

Monroe, La. – *Hope Pawlik* became the sixth Warhawk to reach 1,000 career kills on Saturday, Sept. 24, against Georgia State.

Similar to reaching 1,000 career points is a milestone in basketball, reaching 1,000 career kills in volleyball is much the same. A kill is any kind of attack by any player that leads directly to a point, whether that point is from the ball hitting the floor or the opposing team was unable to return the ball.

Pawlik set a goal to reach 1,000 kills when she started playing at ULM and without even realizing it she reached that goal in Fant-Ewing Coliseum in the second game of Sun Belt Conference play.

Pawlik, a Willis, Texas native, did not start her volleyball career as a child as many college athletes do, but instead began playing when she was a sophomore in high school.

“I loved soccer. I wanted to be the next Mia Hamm,” Pawlik said.

Pawlik played soccer from four years old until she was a freshman in high school. It wasn’t until after a soccer injury that Pawlik turned to volleyball.

Volleyball came easy for Pawlik and she saw the sport as fun rather than as a job.

With her original plans of going to West Point after high school falling through, Pawlik was put in contact with Coach *Patrick Hiltz* at ULM and continued her volleyball career into college with a scholarship.

“Hope has been a blessing to this program ever since we first spoke on the phone several years ago,” said Hiltz. “As coaches we were able to spot her talent easily.”

Pawlik assumed the role of a starter despite dealing with some health issues during her first preseason. With health issues and an unsuccessful season, Pawlik contemplated the idea of quitting volleyball.

“My first year here I was miserable. I wanted to quit, but Pat (Hiltz) made me more of a positive player and made me realize my actual role here at ULM,” said Pawlik. “Pat helped me a lot in talking things out and helping me see a different side of things. Our assistant coach at the time, David (Fischer), also helped me find my passion for volleyball again through his coaching style in beach volleyball. They impacted me a lot in finding a new love for the game.”

Pawlik also had some guidance from one of her teammates that year, Blanca Ocana. Ocana was a senior from Guatemala who became a mentor to the freshman.

“Blanca was a very intense player,” said Pawlik. “If you did a good job she was the first one to cheer you on, but if you didn't put in effort she was the first person to get in your face. She found a way to motivate everyone in a different way and it helped me improve my game. Blanca helped me come out of my shell and grow as a player mentally.”

Even though Ocana suffered an injury that took her off the court for the indoor season that year, she still had a big impact on Pawlik from the sidelines.

“For a freshman she did a perfect job, doing more than just a few kills,” said Ocana. “The way she catapulted the team and held it there was a lot for her but she handled it like a senior. It's nice knowing the Texas girl I met four years ago is reaching this milestone. I'm so proud of her.”

Pawlik ended her freshman year with double digits in two different statistical categories in four different matches and double digit kills in 10 matches and has since built on the foundation of her freshman year as she has progressed to her senior year.

“My freshman year I was a little bit hard-headed and I came to practice like I was the number one player on earth. Now I come to practice and I want to get better.”

The foundation that Pawlik has built on from her freshman year has put her in the position to pass a big milestone in her volleyball career and become a member of the 1,000 kills club as only the sixth Warhawk to do so.

“It was something I set a goal for when I first got to ULM, and I'm so happy I was able to reach that goal,” said Pawlik. “I'm thrilled I was able to do it this season with a team that is amazing to be with and pushed to achieve my goals.”

Former Warhawk Lynn Edwards (1985-88), holds the all-time record at 1521 kills.

Pawlik has become a mainstay for ULM as she has played in 96 percent of the matches from her freshman through junior year.

“Hope's impact on the court has been immeasurable,” said Hiltz. “It was clear early on that she would be one of the best to ever play for the Warhawks. By the time her junior year rolled around, Hope had become a go-to player that new players looked up to.”

Pawlik has stayed involved in volleyball throughout the summer and has spent many summers coaching volleyball to help save money for her future.

“Transitioning back and forth (from player to coach and coach to player) is hard,” said Pawlik. “It gives me a different view on things. It makes me realize just how hard Coach Pat's job is. The people who don't coach don't realize how hard it is to coach, especially

as an ex-player. It helps me take the things that they (the coaches) say, even when they're mad, a little more positively."

With the new insights that coaching has given her, the senior tries to use those insights to her advantage as she closes out her final year as a Warhawk.

"Hope has come full circle," said Hiltz. "As a freshman she looked up to the seniors and allowed them to mentor her. Now, she recognizes that her legacy within this program won't come from everything that she will accomplish on the court. Instead she has learned that her teammates will remember her more for what she did for them while she was here to make them the best players they can possibly be. In this way, Hope is setting herself up to be a player that will continue to have an impact on this program even long after she graduates."

Pawlik is set to graduate as a criminal justice major in December 2016.

Inspired by her father's encouragement, the senior has had her sights set on being a corporate business lawyer ever since she was a kid. Especially after her junior high class debated over books, her mind was set.

"I love to debate," said Pawlik. "I feel like it's something that will keep me interested for the rest of my life. I also like to listen to different views. It's interesting to see how different people process things and then respond."

Pawlik looks to continue her education and obtain her graduate degree while also possibly going to law school. She also has dreams of working in the secret service or border control in the meantime to help raise money for obtaining a law degree.

Pawlik realizes her time at ULM is quickly coming to a close and cherishes every moment that she can.

With 15 games left in the regular season, Pawlik sits at fifth on the leaderboard (1008 kills) and looks to move her way up.

The Warhawks next home game is Oct. 14, against Little Rock at 6:30 p.m.