

Zoe Goodman may be listed at only 5-foot-5 on Scorebooklive.com, but sometimes words are a better gauge of a person's size – or impact on a team.

“She is kind of like the quiet giant,” New Hope High School volleyball coach Allison Woolbright said. “Her presence is huge, but she doesn't have to be real vocal like some other players.”

It's a testament to Goodman's athleticism and leadership ability that someone who has coached her in her *other* sport perfectly captures what the NHHS senior means to a team.

Next school year, Goodman will try to make the same impact on a new team. On Thursday morning, Goodman celebrated her decision to play softball at Itawamba Community College in Fulton during a signing ceremony at NHHS.

“She has the biggest heart,” Woolbright said. “She is sometimes quiet, but has a huge presence on the court and on the field. My girls (Kensley and Annie) have played softball with her, too, so I know that as well. She is a full team player, a leader. She brings so much to a team, a field, a court. I know she is going to fit in great at ICC.”

NHHS fast-pitch softball coach Casey Halford echoed Woolbright in praising Goodman, who is primarily a catcher but is versatile enough to play a number of positions, including outfield, for the variety of ways she impacts a program.

Goodman has been a starter on the fast-pitch softball team since her seventh-grade year, even though she had an arm injury that season. Halford took over the program when Goodman was an eighth-grader and has loved having a healthy leader behind the plate. Goodman also played in 18-and-under travel fast-pitch softball tournaments with Halford's teams when she was 12 and 13 years old.

“I have always trusted her back there,” Halford said. “She is very perceptive with the game. She notices pitcher grips and can use non-verbal communication to let the pitcher know how to attack a hitter based on how they are standing. She also lets me know things with signals.

“It has been a comfort knowing she is there, and I am definitely going to miss her.”

Halford said Goodman is a “big student of the game” and has taken pride in nurturing and mentoring younger players in the program. She is excited to see how Goodman transitions to the college game, whether it is behind the plate or in the outfield.

“She is a competitor, so she is going to do whatever it takes to be on the field,” Halford said. “She has played on high-level travel ball teams over the years. She has played under some of the greatest coaches I have ever known, so she is ready for the challenge. She will make it her mission to earn that spot, wherever she chooses to work.”

Goodman said went on an official visit to ICC a year ago Thursday. Prior to that, she said she attended several camps at the school and knew pretty early she was going to go there. She said the atmosphere at ICC made her feel “at home” because it was a lot like New Hope.

Goodman said she visited a few other schools and a few months later ultimately picked ICC. She said she let the coaches know at the end of October or early in November.

“I knew from the start that was going to be the place,” Goodman said.

Earlier in November, pitcher Adi Dueitt announced her intention to play softball at Northwest Mississippi C.C. in Senatobia. The battery of Dueitt and Goodman will have one more season at NHHS to silence hitters with their non-verbal methods of communication. Goodman

said she takes pride in being able to impact a game without being loud, or even having to say a word.

“I am not big talking, but if something needs to be said I will definitely be the one to say it,” Goodman said.

Goodman feels she always has been a teammate who tries her best to encourage her peers and to pick them up when they’re not having a great day. She isn’t sure if that officially qualifies her to be a “quiet giant”, but she smiled when told of Woolbright’s moniker for her and said she will do her best to find ways to impact the ICC softball program.

“I feel like my teammates would even say I am hard on them, but it is only because I know how good we can be as a team and I know our goals for the team,” Goodman said. “I have seen a lot of great competition playing with the Blue Angels. I think travel ball has shown me more of a picture what to expect in college.”