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UNIVERSITY PARK - After dominating the PIAA in Class 2A for six years, the Northeastern boys volleyball team will take on an even bigger challenge. The Bobcats are moving up to Class 3A for the 2018-19 school year and coach Matt Wilson is looking forward to the challenge.

"I'm excited," said Wilson of the move. "You have to realize, we play them all. We search them out. We hunt them down. At the end of the day, our blueprint is good enough to win anywhere and I have no problem saying that."

Northeastern completed its dominating run in Class 2A by claiming its sixth consecutive state title on June 9 at Penn State's Recreation Hall, which ties a PIAA record. Haverford first achieved the feat with six titles from 1966-1971.

"I won't lie," Northeastern coach Matt Wilson said of tying the record, "I think it's awesome. I'm not going to hold back today, my friends. Look, you have to go back to the '60s, and the game has changed quite a bit."

Tying Haverford's record was obviously a goal for Wilson and his Bobcats.

"We said we were going after that," Wilson admitted. "We didn't say it publicly, but we talked about it. We had a chance to do something only one other team had achieved and we were able to reach that goal. It's something to be proud of."

But the sixth title didn't come easy. Manheim Central, a 3-0 loser to Northeastern in the District 3 title match, turned in an impressive performance in the first set. The Barons led by five on three occasions in the first set and shocked the Bobcats, 25-23, to take a surprising lead in the best-of-five final.

"In Set 1, I had to go into emergency mode, but I know I don't have to second guess what goes on behind me," said Wilson, who credited his coaching staff for the Bobcats response in the next three sets. "Those gentlemen need to be credited. My fellow coaches were the MVPs today."

Northeastern dominated the second set as senior outside hitter Cole Brillhart recorded six of his match high 17 kills in a 25-13 bombing of the Barons.

"It's been amazing," said Brillhart, who also recorded four blocks, three assists, and three digs. "It's something we'll remember the rest of our lives."

Manheim Central (22-3) rebounded with a solid performance in the third set, and actually held a 17-15 lead, but Northeastern rallied to pull out a 25-22 victory. The Bobcats took charge in the fourth set and posted a dominating 25-13 victory.

"Every year we have one of, if not the best, setters in the state. I think you saw that today with a couple of plays," said Wilson of sophomore setter Austin Richards, who had 49 assists. "We have a plethora of weapons. Being the quarterback of such weaponry is hard."

Brillhart, a Lewis University recruit, was one of three Northeastern hitters who turned in an impressive performance in the title match.

"This is the greatest feeling in the world," said Bobcats senior outside hitter Wyatt Hughes, who had 13 kills. "This group of guys, I've been with them all four years, I love them all. I couldn't imagine playing with any other team."

Alex Finch, a junior middle hitter, added nine kills and three blocks.

"There's a certain bit of pressure [in defending a state title], but it's what we do," Finch said. "We're used to it."

Manheim Central coach Craig Dietrich was impressed with Northeastern's performance, but also pleased with the play of his squad.

"The speed they go at is nearly impossible to simulate," Dietrich said. "Our guys played their hearts out. Getting that first set was a big confidence booster for us. We played well enough. Maybe if that third set goes the other way...."

Manheim Central was making its first appearance in a PIAA title match.

"I usually don't like silver medals," Dietrich said. "I didn't like the silver medals at leagues and I didn't like the silver medals at districts. But I'll certainly settle for this silver medal here. We're one of the

two best Class 2A teams in the state. Our guys put in a lot of work for this. Unfortunately this didn't work out, but it doesn't take away how proud I am of these guys."

Northeastern finished the season with a perfect 23-0 record. The Bobcats swept their first 13 opponents and lost only five games all season, with its only blemishes before the state final coming in victories against Class 3A semifinalist Central York. Northeastern also won three tournaments: Cambridge Springs, its own Bobcat Invitational, and Central York's Koller Classic.

"Every one of them is different, and they all deserve to be told they're the best," said Wilson, when asked if this squad was his best.