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Tri-State Sports & News Service

UNIVERSITY PARK - A play in the second set of Saturday's PIAA Class 3A Boys Volleyball championship match painted a perfect picture of how well North Allegheny played on defense.

The Tigers had rallied from a 5-1 deficit to tie the set at 12-12. The following volley lasted for well over a minute and North Allegheny blocked three shots by Central York's top hitter Braden Richard, with Tigers middle hitter Alex Zubrow scoring on the last of those three blocks.

"North Allegheny played a great match," Central York coach Todd Goodling said. "North Allegheny clearly won the serve-pass game against us. I also thought their defense and blocking was excellent. They did exactly what they needed to do to beat us."

And that's just what North Allegheny did. The Tigers won their second straight PIAA title and increased their two-year winning streak to 46 matches with a 3-0 sweep of Central York at Penn State's Pegula Ice Arena.

North Allegheny was making its record 17th appearance in the PIAA finals and claimed its seventh title. Central York, a loser to North Allegheny in last year's semifinals, was making its 13th title match appearance and had to settle for its sixth silver medal.

"We read in a newspaper article that in five previous championship appearances Central York had beaten North Allegheny all five times," North Allegheny setter Sava Topich said. "We were not going to let them make it six."

North Allegheny led most of the first set and built an 18-12 lead. Central York battled back to cut the Tigers lead to 21-20 with Richard leading the way with six kills. The Tigers scored four of the next five points to shut down the Panthers rally and record a 25-21 victory.

Despite the loss, Central York opened the the second set by scoring five of the first six points. North Allegheny slowly chipped away at the deficit until a kill by Ben Mendes tied the match at 12-12.

Then came the Tigers impressive volley that included the three blocks of Richard and North Allegheny took a lead they would not relinquish. Zubrow also recorded three kills late in the set, as North Allegheny pulled out a 25-20 victory.

"You don't have to win the long volleys, but you get that intangible of energy and momentum when you do," North Allegheny coach Dan Schall said. We had already climbed back from a 5-1 deficit. There was a moment of taking control of that game when we won that volley."

North Allegheny took charge in the third set, with Drew Hunker leading the way with five kills. The Tigers registered a 25-20 victory to complete their title.

"The passing was great today," Hunker said. "He just throws it up and we all swing."

Hunker led the Tigers with 13 kills, Jeremiah Zemet had seven, and Mendes and Zubrow had six each. Zubrow led th Tigers with seven blocks, Zemet had six, and Mendes had five.

"This was the best match I played all year," said North Allegheny setter Sava Topich, who had 32 assists. "I spread the offense pretty well and came up with a few digs."

Schall was very impressed with how his squad shut down Central York's potent attack.

"Central York has a very complicated offense that involves a lot of motion," Schall said. "They have a lot of good hitters, but their offense is generated from three key positions. Our preparation centered on being aware where they were. We were keyed in on their three big guns. The blocking was fantastic. Any block against those guys is a win."

North Allegheny's title was a bit surprising to some since they Tigers had only three returning starters.

"What makes winning so special is the journey," Schall said. "Most of the kids on this team did not start on last year's squad, but they worked just as hard as our starters in practice."

They waited their turn and made the most of their opportunity. This ends one chapter and begins another for the kids who are coming back."

North Allegheny qualified for the state tournament by winning the WPIAL title. The Tigers posted a 25-15, 16-25, 25-18, 25-23 victory in the first round against District 3 fourth place finisher Landisville Hempfield, then swept WPIAL third-place finisher Shaler, 25-16, 25-17, 25-21, in the quarterfinals.

North Allegheny earned its 17th trip to the finals with a 25-16, 21-25, 25-23, 25-19 semifinal victory against WPIAL runner-up Bethel Park.

Central York earned its PIAA berth by winning the District 3 title. The Panthers opened the tournament with a 25-17, 25-16, 25-20 sweep of District 11 runner-up Parkland, then posted a 25-16, 25-17, 24-26, 25-16 win against District 1 third place finisher Pennsbury.

Central York advanced to the title match with a 25-20, 17-25, 20-25, 32-30, 15-8 win over Northeastern, the District 3 runner-up, in the semifinals.

"It's frustrating to play this way in the last match of the season," Goodling said. "We are a much better team than we showed. All congrats to North Allegheny, they played a great match."

Both teams lose nine seniors to graduation, so both will have a relatively inexperienced squad next season.