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MECHANICSBURG - In 2000, the PIAA added a third classification for girls volleyball. In the 20 years that have passed, Northern Cambria has been the most successful school to compete in Class 1A in the state championships.

Coach Mike Hogan has led the Colts to six appearances in the title match and brought back four championship trophies to the District 6 school.

The only other school to make six title match appearances in Class 1A is Marian Catholic, but the District 11 school has won only two titles during this stretch.

Northern Cambria's most recent title came on Nov. 15 at Cumberland Valley High School, as the Colts swept District 11 champion Pottsville Nativity B.V.M. to become the third team in Class 1A history to win back-to-back titles.

The only other schools to win consecutive titles in Class 1A are Farrell (2001 and 2002) and Reading Central Catholic (2006 and 2007).

"It's really special to win back-to-back titles," said Hogan, now in his 29th season. "I don't think the school has ever had back-to-back titles in any sport. It's tough enough to win one title. It's even tougher to repeat."

Northern Cambria, who also won PIAA titles 2005 and 2009, came out of the gate playing like defending champions. The Colts scored the first three points of the opening set and trailed only once in a 25-14 blowout. Junior outside hitter Maggie Hogan recorded seven of her game-high 20 kills in the set.

"We got off to a great start," Hogan said. "Our previous experience in the finals played a big part. Our girls knew what to expect, while Nativity had never played in the title match."

Northern Cambria's momentum carried over to the second set, as the Colts built an 11-3 lead, but Nativity did not roll over. The Green Wave scored eight of the next nine points to cut Northern Cambria's advantage to one point (12-11).

That's as close as Nativity would get as the Colts took charge with Hogan recording six more kills in a 25-18 victory.

"We began fighting back in the second set," Nativity coach Jennifer Daubert said. "I told the girls that we had two options. We could fold and go home or we could give everything that we had. We chose option No. 2 and the girls just came out and gave everything that we possibly had out there on the floor. If you can do that in your volleyball career, then you can live with yourself."

Nativity gave Northern Cambria all it could handle in the third set. The Green Wave jumped out to a 7-4 lead and actually led by five points (18-13) midway through the set.

The Colts remained poised and focused and fought their way back to tie the set at 22-22. There were five lead changes down the stretch. After a tie at 29, senior middle hitter Jenna Lutch delivered kills on the final two points to help Northern Cambria bring the trophy home.

"They were loading up on Maggie," said coach Hogan of his daughter. "That opened things up for Jenna and she made the most of her opportunity. She had a fantastic match."

Lutch recorded an astounding 12 kills in the set, to finish with 15.

"Once we started getting down, that's when I usually start kicking it into gear," Lutch said. "They put so much of a block on Maggie that they didn't see me coming. We work together as a team and never get down on each other."

Nativity's Allison Clarke, a senior middle hitter, had eight of her ten kills in the final set. Samantha Heenan, a junior outside hitter, led the Green Wave with 15 kills.

"(Nativity) sure made us work for that one," said coach Hogan of the fifth set. "They started moving the ball around, throwing it deep and making some shots on us. Maybe we got caught up in the moment a little bit and started thinking that we had the match won. Like always, our girls are super coachable and they refocused and kept going."

Outside hitter Autumn Donatelli is one of five Northern Cambria seniors who will graduate as a two-time PIAA champion.

"This means the world to us," said Donatelli of the back-to-back titles. "Our goal this year was to come back strong and win another title. We have made a legacy for ourselves."

Northern Cambria advanced to the title match with wins over Fort Cherry (21-25, 25-16, 25-14, 26-24), Cochranon (25-17, 25-18, 19-25, 25-14), and Clarion (31-29, 21-25, 25-18, 27-25).

Nativity earned its berth with wins over Sacred Heart Academy (25-15, 25-11, 25-20), Lititz Christian (25-16, 25-11, 25-7), and Berlin Brothersvalley (25-20, 20-25, 25-19, 22-25, 15-13).