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Just look at the numbers and it's easy to see why Clarion High School is by far the PIAA's top Class 1A girls volleyball team over the 2020 and 2021 seasons.

The Bobcats have a perfect 45-0 record over the two seasons and registered a 3-0 sweep in all but one of those matches. Seven of the victories came during PIAA tournament competition and all seven ended in three sets.

Clarion capped its impressive 45-match winning streak with a 3-0 sweep of Sacred Heart in the PIAA Class 1A title match, the first of four title matches held on Nov. 20 at Cumberland Valley High School.

"Last year's success played a big part in our success this year," Clarion coach Shari Campbell said. "We were able to build on our success from last year. In fact, our loss in the 2019 semifinals (to Northern Cambria) also played a part in us winning both titles. The girls didn't want to experience that feeling of losing again."

Clarion (21-0) qualified for the state tournament by winning its fourth consecutive District 9 title. The Bobcats earned a return trip to the finals with wins over WPIAL (District 7) third-place finisher California, 3-0 in the first round; WPIAL runner-up Greensburg Central Catholic, 3-0 in the quarterfinals; and WPIAL champion Bishop Canevin, 3-0 in the semifinals.

Sacred Heart (19-8) qualified for the state tournament by winning its second straight District 1 title. The Lions were making their first appearance in the finals after posting wins over District 3 champion Lititz Christian, 3-0 in the first round; District 11 champion Marian Catholic, 3-1 in the quarterfinals; and District 4 champion Canton, 3-0 in the semifinals.

Clarion came out swinging in the first set but its powerful hitting attack was a bit off target at times. The Bobcats recorded 17 kills while the Lions had only six, but the lead changed hands 16 times during the set. Trailing 20-19, Clarion took charge by scoring six of the last eight points to pull out a 25-22 victory.

"I think we had a little bit of nerves and too much energy at the start," Campbell said. "We beat ourselves a little bit in that set. Sometimes we're good at that. Once we calmed down, we really starting playing volleyball."

Korrin Burns, a 5-11 senior outside hitter, recorded 10 kills in the first set, while Aryana Girvan, a 5-6 junior outside hitter, had five.

"I really thought we had them in the first set," Sacred Heart coach Sam Moyerman said. "We played really well. We did a good job of slowing down Burns. I was hoping we could keep it going."

Sacred Heart scored the first three points of the second set and held a 6-4 lead. That's when Clarion took over and dominated the rest of the match. The Bobcats outscored the Lions 21-7 the rest of the set to record a 25-13 victory and take a commanding 2-0 lead.

"Game two just got away from us early," Moyerman said. "It's hard to just turn around and come back. We did better in set three, but every time we got a little push, they stepped up."

Clarion jumped out to a 10-2 lead in the third set, but Sacred Heart battled back to cut the deficit to 19-16. Clarion countered with a 6-2 run, which included two kills and a serving ace by Burns, to conclude a 25-18 victory, thus clinching the sweep.

"Our girls didn't get flustered. That's been a key to our success," Campbell said. "We've been in these situations before. When push comes to shove, and their backs are against the wall, these kids know how to answer."

Moyerman felt Clarion's previous experience in a championship match played a big part in the match.

"They had been here before," Moyerman said. "They didn't get flustered after that first set. The leadership they have on the court didn't let that happen. We only have one senior on this squad, so getting back here next year will be our goal. We've been here and understand what it takes."

"There's nothing to be sad about," said libero Bella O'Toole, Sacred Heart's only senior. "We had a great season, a historic season. We beat Villa Maria. We had never done that before. We go to the state tournament and beat the District 11 champion (Marian Catholic). We've never done that before. We made the semis and here we are in the finals. We went down 3-0 but there's nothing to be sad about. We had a great season."

Moyerman had similar feelings.

"The girls played a really good match and had a really great season," Moyerman said. "They don't have anything to be ashamed of. And with a lot of them coming back they know what it takes when you get to this moment to be able to walk away with the gold trophy instead of the silver one."

Burns, who has committed to St. Francis, finished the match with 21 kills, 3 aces, 7 digs, and 3 blocks. Girvan had 10 kills and 6 digs. Senior setter Noel Anthony had 33 assists, 8 digs, and 3 aces.

"I'm gonna try my best not to cry," said Burns, a four-year starter who finished her career with more than 1,500 kills. "This has been a big part of my life for four years. It's been just an amazing journey. Coach Campbell has been a big part of that. This was my last match at Clarion. That's a lot to take in."

Clarion was making its fifth appearance in the finals. The Bobcats also placed second in 2010 and 2011, then won their first state title in 2012.

"They are all special," said Campbell, when asked if this title meant more than the others. "Every team is different for different reasons. You have to be forward thinking and love the moment you're in. I have such great memories of both teams. I even have great memories of our teams in 2010, 2022, and 2012 that were in the finals. It's about the journey and each is unique."