



# STAYING ON TOP

**NORTH ALLEGHENY  
BOYS VOLLEYBALL  
TEAM CAPTURES  
WPIAL TITLE.**

BY JENNIFER BROZAK



Photos by J.J. LaBella

The North Allegheny boys volleyball team entered the 2016-2017 season ranked No. 1 in the WPIAL, and ended the season exactly the same way.

The Tigers proved their dominance on the court once again when they captured their 12th WPIAL title in a heated battle against the Penn-Trafford Warriors, the defending champions. The Tigers bested the Warriors in a 3-0 win at Baldwin High School in May to claim the title.

“This was an exceptionally talented group of athletes,” says Tigers head coach Dan Schall. “In addition to their athleticism and skill, they were fiercely competitive. They were deeply committed to being the best players and team they could be, which extends beyond the traditional season. They also possessed a selflessness that is rare. To accept roles—sometimes smaller than ideal—there needed to be sacrifice and support for one another.”

After beating Peters Township in the quarterfinal and Seneca Valley in the semifinal match, the hard-won WPIAL title match against Penn-Trafford was fraught with intense moments.

“In the final, we jumped on Penn-Trafford in set one, coasting to a 25-10 win,” recounts Schall. “The second and third sets were tightly contested, winning 25-22 and 25-23. We trailed 23-21 in the third set before scoring four consecutive points to finish the match.”

Junior Canyon Tuman put the final kill away for championship point. Seniors Luke Visgitis and Danny Lebovitz were statistical leaders, with 15 kills and 28 digs respectively.

Luke Visgitis, Eric Visgitis, Canyon Tuman and M.J. Barton were voted to the first team WPIAL Class AAA All-Star team. Danny Lebovitz and Seth Russell were voted to the second team of the All-Star team, while Jason Stiefvater was voted to the third team. Luke, Eric, M.J. and Canyon also were recognized as all-state players.

“I’m in an incredibly fortunate position to coach and teach kids in very formative years of their lives. It’s remarkable and rewarding to see young players trying the game



for the first time to elite players among the best in the country. This maturity and transformation is continually impressive,” says Schall.

The Tigers, who’ve been the Class AAA champions for 12 out of the past 15 years, went on to battle Central York for the PIAA title in June but suffered a 3-1 loss. The team has made it to the PIAA championship a record 15 times, but this was the team’s first appearance after a two-year absence.

“Reaching the state finals is never something to be taken for granted, but we certainly hope that we’re one of the two teams playing in the final match each year,” notes Schall. “The entire journey of getting there was a rewarding experience that allowed our players to fully test their ability and character.”

The Tigers ended the season with a nearly perfect 22-1 record. Looking ahead to the 2017-2018 season this spring, Schall

expects last year’s underclassmen to play significant roles.

“Having experienced the WPIAL title and a trip to the state final serves as a great motivator,” he says. “Our yearly goals include being the best we can possibly be and enjoying this process—doing those things could lead again to a very successful post-season. If you ask any one of the players, they would like to take it one step further.” ■

