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Maidens win state title

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CARLISLE – The fact that Souderton made the Maidens work so hard for it only made the championship sweeter.

North Penn survived its toughest test of the year on the biggest stage of the year as the Maidens earned an 8-7 double-overtime victory over the Indians in the girls water polo state championship Saturday night at Cumberland Valley High School.

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The win, made possible by Amy Plewinski's game-winner in the second overtime, completed an undefeated 30-0 season for North Penn, its first unbeaten season in school history, and the victory gave the Maidens their first state title since 1999, when assistant coach Katie Plewinski was on the team.

The Maidens had to survive a tough test against Cumberland Valley, defeating the host school in a game that decided which team would play for the championship, and which would play in the consolation.

The Maidens made it through, and Cumberland Valley would wind up defeating Wilson in the third-place game.

Souderton too had a tough road to the final, but just like North Penn, went 3-0 to reach the title game.

In a pool loaded with all-state players, the Maidens stood a bit taller, overcoming a five-goal performance by all-stater Natalie Pyrz to take the crown.

“That was our goal, since day one, to be state champs,” said North Penn's Lauren French, also known as Ms. Water Polo.

French earned the Ms. Water Polo distinction for her all-around play, and although limited to one goal, it showed how much attention the Indians had to pay her.

“When you look at what opposing teams do, their defenses are set up to shut her down,” said North Penn coach Bill Bartle, who earned Coach of the Year honors.

The Maidens battled to leads of 6-4 and 7-5 and seemingly had it secured.

“We knew them like the back of our hand,” said French, whose team defeated Souderton twice in the regular season. “We know them better than any other team.”

But the Indians again battled back, tying it at 7-7 and forcing overtime.

Both teams had chances in the first overtime (it is not sudden death), and then after Plewinski put the Maidens up 8-7 with 1:33 left in the second OT, North Penn played its trademark strong defense to hold on.

“It was obviously very exciting for the fans,” Bartle said with a laugh, poking fun at how nerve-racking it was for the coaches and players. “They forced us to hit some outside shots, and fortunately we hit enough.

“I think we had some opportunities that we weren’t taking, and I think when the girls missed a couple they became a little hesitant to shoot the ball. We were telling Amy all day to not be afraid to shoot the ball, and she was open and took advantage, and hit a great shot.”

The Indians capped a great year as well.

“I don’t think anyone in the state thought we could take them into overtime, except for ourselves,” Indians coach Terrance Nesensohn said. “I think how well we played got set up by two great games – against Governor Mifflin last night, we were down to them but came back, and today we were down two goals to Wilson but we came back, and I think that really set the tone for the girls and it showed how much the season really meant to them and how much heart they put into this season.”



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