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Thursday, September 20, 2007

Posted on Wed, Sep 19, 2007

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NP tops Wissy in the water

By Mary jane souder

LOWER GWYNEDD — Nico Gimenez was playing defense like a man possessed, and when North Penn's senior captain – after coming up with a steal - found teammate Jack Else for a score at the 3:38 mark of the third period of Wednesday's water polo match against Wissahickon, the Knights, who trailed 5-2 at the half, went on top 6-5. It was their first lead of the game.

"They say the best offense is a good defense," Gimenez said. "If you shut down their offense, they can't score, and it gives you opportunities to counter, to get up the pool, and that's when you start putting the ball in the back of the net.

"Everything always starts out with defense in the back of the pool."

And no one played defense better than Gimenez, who finished the day with nine steals and spearheaded an inspired third quarter effort that saw the Knights turn a three-goal halftime deficit into a 10-5 lead on their way to a 13-7 win over the pesky Trojans.

"They have played in a lot of championship games in the past," Wissahickon coach Matt Rader said. "The issue isn't 'What are we going to do?' Wissahickon is beating us.' It's, 'We're beating ourselves. Let's kick it up a notch.'"

The win capped a sweep for North Penn. Earlier, the Maidens – sparked by the four-goal, two-assist effort of Molly Robinson and the hat trick from Lauren French – rolled to an 11-3 win, but it was the nightcap that had the fans on the edge of their seats.

The Trojans (5-5), thanks to a pair of Matt Fellin goals, led 2-1 after one quarter. Erik Waechter (Adam Bossert assist) turned a Knight turnover into a goal that put the Trojans on top 3-1. A breakaway goal by Dan Dingman pulled the Knights to within one, but the Trojans used goals by Cakouros and Waechter (after a Doug Greer steal) to go into the half with a 5-2 lead. "I want to give all the credit to Wissahickon," Knight coach Brian Faikish said. "They're a very well-coached team. They have a lot of spirit

and a lot of skills. They took it to us in the first half. They beat us in every single category – from the scoreboard down to loose balls to forcing turnovers." Faikish switched to a pressing defense in the second half, an adjustment that paid huge dividends. The third quarter started with a strong passing sequence from Else to Dingman to Gimenez for the score, and then a long pass from goalie C.J. Millionig to Jeff Smallwood in the right corner culminated with a goal by Jamison Anton. A Trojan shot off the post set up a nifty goal from Gimenez to Smallwood, who slammed it home in the equivalent of a slam dunk that knotted the score and ignited the North Penn faithful. Else followed with a goal and then came up with a steal that set up a Gimenez goal. By the time Anton scored with just over a minute to play, the Knights led 10-5, and a win was all but assured. "In the first half, they were beating us to everything," Gimenez said. "At halftime, we said, 'Alright, we just have to stop thinking about what happened in the past and just start this game over.' We started

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working as a team instead of individuals. Once you score the first goal, the crowd picks up, and everything is a big wave, and it carries the momentum." Earlier, the Maidens seized early control of their game against the Trojans (6-4). Robinson found Rebecca Hannings for a goal 19 seconds into the contest. A Laura Hennessey steal resulted in a goal by Robinson. Another goal by Robinson was followed by back-to-back goals by French, and the Maidens were rolling. "We just try to work on our basics, try to work on things we have been working on at practice, try to make everything perfect, so when it comes down to big tournaments, we can finish the things we have been working on," said Robinson, noting that passing is a key. "We work on that all the time. Our coach emphasizes it because passing has a lot to do with the game. If you can't make good passes, you can't play a good game." Coach Bill Bartle pointed to the play of his three captains - Robinson, French and Hannings - as a key to his team's 6-0 start. "They're the leaders of the team," he said. "They combined with four new starters to make up this year's team. We're fortunate that we have a very strong team, and we're able to give some of our younger players an opportunity to gain a little experience by our first team getting a little bit of a lead early."

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