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Sports

## WATER POLO: North Penn sweeps past Souderton Area

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By KEV HUNTER

[khunter@thereporteronline.com](mailto:khunter@thereporteronline.com)

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FRANCONIA TWP — In front of a spirited capacity crowd at the Souderton Area High School Natatorium, the North Penn boys and girls water polo teams each held off strong challenges from the Indians Tuesday night to remain unbeaten in Suburban One League play.

The Maidens, fresh off an impressive runner-up finish at Beast of the East, used some clutch plays to turn a 9-7, fourth-quarter lead into a four-goal advantage, and NP held on for an 11-8 victory over their area rival.

In the second half of the doubleheader, the Knights jumped out to an early 3-0 lead, stayed in control and then withstood a late Souderton rally to prevail 14-10.

The Maidens (12-1) are a perfect 11-0 against PA competition this fall, and for good reason. When things were most tense, as the Indians cut a sizeable NP lead down to just 9-7, the Maidens worked the ball around and found an open Jenn Halcovage out in front, who fired in the second of her two goals to stretch the margin to 10-7.

Moments later, captain Brooke Else followed up her own rebound to pretty much put the game away at 11-7.

“I think that’s our team maturing a little bit,” Maidens coach Bill Bartle said of his squad’s fourth-quarter play. “We played well this weekend against a really strong team from Ohio (Upper Arlington, in a 10-9 defeat), and we played a couple teams (Governor Mifflin, Thomas Worthington, OH) in the semifinals and finals who were very good, and that helped us mature a little bit. That might have helped us here tonight.”

Else finished with a hat trick for the Maidens (4-0 in SOL) and Brittney Patterson also scored three times.

“Souderton played very well and I’m very pleased with the way our girls played,” Bartle said. “Any time North Penn and Souderton play, you know it’s gonna be a nail biter. Souderton played really hard. They’re a very aggressive team. I’m very proud of our girls. It was just their heart and desire that pulled it through.”

The Knights (8-3 overall and 4-0 in the division) then took the pool and dominated things early, building a 6-2 lead by the end of the first quarter.

“We saw Souderton play at Beast of the East this past weekend, and they held up against some pretty good teams,” said Knights coach Jason Grubb, whose Knights went 3-1 at the tournament. “We knew if we could get out to a good start against them, hopefully the game would be a little bit easier.”

For the sixth time in seven games, North Penn scored at least 14 goals. The Knights are 8-1 in their last nine.

Pat Dunigan's four goals were a game-high Tuesday, and Jack Morris and Kevin Dunigan each added three.

"From the start, our passing was crisp," Grubb said. "The game gets so much easier if you have those clean passes. It's a good rivalry. The teams go back and forth, they cut it down close at the end, and it was a good finish...Right now, we're playing well. This is the best we've played yet this year so hopefully we keep getting better each game and then hopefully at the end of the year we come out ahead."

The Souderton boys and girls are also looking to peak in the postseason, and on Tuesday they looked solid against a great opponent.

The Souderton girls got off to a rough start against NP but then went to a press on defense and got back into the game.

"We shut them down for three quarters, and then slowly but surely we got our offense going," Big Red coach Terrence Nesensohn said. "The boys made a late comeback. Just like the girls, we have to be able to play four quarters...I told both teams that our goal is get better each game and be a very dangerous team come playoff time."

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