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## North Penn wins state title

MECHANICSBURG — The best senior class the North Penn boys water polo program has ever had finished their careers in fitting fashion Saturday night at Cumberland Valley High School, leading the way to a 10-9 win over Wilson in the state championship game.

The win gave the Knights their second straight title, and third in the last four years. "When it was all over, the high that went through the whole pool was amazing — it was a great feeling," North Penn senior Dan Dingman said.

Dingman was named Mr. Water Polo, and he had two goals in the win over Wilson. Jack Else and Kyle Manger each had three goals, and Nico Gimenez and Brian Kerr each added one.

Dingman made First Team All-State, along with fellow seniors Nico Gimenez and Kyle Manger.

Also for North Penn, Jamison Anton made the second team, Jack Else made the third team, and Nick Ortleib earned honorable mention.

The Knights blew out to a 5-1 lead over Wilson in the first quarter.

"We came out on fire," said coach Brian Faikish, who guided the Knights to their three titles in 2004, '06 and this year. "The guys played a great first quarter. Wilson came back, but we didn't give up. And it basically came down to the last possession."

The Knights also won a state title in 1996, and now have dominated the last four seasons. It was close to being four titles in a row — they lost in the state final in overtime to Souderton in 2005.

One of the things that set this North Penn team apart was the dedication, from coast to coast.

"Our season started in June, when we had a training trip to Pepperdine University in California," Faikish said. "The guys worked extremely hard this year. The thing you always battle after winning a state championship is complacency, but these guys were never satisfied. The leadership was second to none. The seniors really carried us."

A barometer of a team's greatness is how good was its opponents, and Wilson fought North Penn in two straight state finals, losing 10-8 last year and 10-9 this year.

"Wilson is a great squad," Faikish said. "They're just as fast. They're just as aggressive. And that's a testament to our guys because they found a way to get it done."

North Penn did not have a returning starting goalie going into this year, leaving a big hole to fill between the pipes.

"Nick Ortleib was one of the big question marks — we had the field players going into the year, but the question mark was goalie," Faikish said. "He had an unbelievable tournament, and is one of the main reasons we were able to win. We had a lot of close wins, and he came up huge and made some great saves. If he was a question mark, I would say he answered that with how he played in states."

Everything, and everyone, came together for North Penn.

"We weren't really led by a single person, but by a team of leaders," Gimenez said.

"It was incredible," Manger said of the final moments. "You see the final seconds tick away, you see your team is winning by one, and you can't say anything. All you do is smile."

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