

You can call him Mr. Water Polo

North Penn's Dan Dingman holds that title after helping lead his team to a state championship.

By Mike Gibson

For The Inquirer

Indiana and Kentucky, among other states, have a Mr. Basketball, which goes to the top high school player of the state.

> Only the state of Pennsylvania has a Mr. Water Polo.

> The trophy resides in the home of Dan Dingman, who was named Mr. Water Polo after leading North Penn to the state title on Saturday night.

> Dingman's steady play throughout the tournament earned him the honor, but he didn't even lead the Knights in scoring in a 10-9 championship win over Wilson West Lawn.

> That honor was shared by two players, Jack Else and Kyle Manger, each of whom scored three goals in the championship match.

> Dingman and Manger also were named first-team all-state, as was Nico Gimenez. Don't ask North Penn head coach Brian Faikish for their seasonal stats, though.

> "We don't really focus on the stats," Faikish said.

> At North Penn, the only important statistic is 26-2. That is the Knights' final record for the season. Other important numbers are four, six and seven - representing state titles in 2004, 2006 and 2007.

> Those numbers were reached because Faikish's focus is on training and commitment. He credits a preseason camp at Pepperdine University in Malibu, Calif., for a lot of the team's development.

> This year, the state tournament was held at Cumberland Valley. Next year, it likely will return to North Penn.

> **Good Knights.** To say it's been a good fall at North Penn would be a massive understatement.

> At least when it comes to sports.

> In addition to water polo, the boys' cross-country team wrapped up a state title over the weekend.

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> That was on top of a league championship, something the girls' cross-country team accomplished as well.

> **Trojans triumph.** The borough of Ambler usually doesn't get the same amount of tennis respect places such as Rosemont, Fairless Hills and Ardmore do.

> Mark Daniels, the tennis coach at Wissahickon, is changing all that.

> Ambler is where the Trojans play, and the best year of high school tennis ever experienced there was just concluded last week.

> The Trojans finished second in the District 1 Class AAA team tournament and reached the quarterfinals of the PIAA championships.

> Seniors Daniela DePaoli and Jami Fein, and Fein's sophomore sister, Rachel Fein, went 53-1 overall in the top three singles spots.

> DePaoli placed second in the District 1 singles tourney and reached the quarterfinals at states. The Fein sisters, meanwhile, placed second in the district as a doubles team and reached the semifinals at states before settling for fourth place.

> "This season is the best season Wissahickon has ever had," said Rachel Fein, whose doubles team fell to the Lower Merion tandem of Kristen Roth and Devi Jadeja in the district finals and then again in the third-place consolation match at states. "It was amazing how many accomplishments we had."

> Added sister Jami: "I never dreamed all this could happen. It took a lot of hard work and practice every day. We took one match at a time and it paid off."

> **Harriton happy.** It's hard to imagine a better exit than the one made by the Harriton doubles team of Lucy Haller and Arielle Spencer. The team won its fourth straight state title last week. Haller and Spencer also won their fourth straight state team championship deciding match. They finished 16-0 for the season and 56-4 over four years.

> **Dinks and dunks.** The best way to stay No. 1 is by beating No. 2.

> That's precisely what the Merion Mercy girls' volleyball team did in the PIAA State Class AA first-round on Tuesday night.

> With a 25-10, 25-14 and 25-15 win over No. 2 Lancaster Mennonite, the Golden Bears removed what many believe was their toughest obstacle to the state title.

> **Event of the week.** State Class AA Pool Play, semifinals and finals in York, tomorrow and Saturday.

> **Mid-Atlantic qualifier.** Thomas Hedges of Solebury School followed his impressive 18th-place finish at the Pennsylvania Independent Schools Cross-Country Championship with another impressive win across the river.

> Hedges won the regional qualifying heat on Sunday in the New Jersey Junior Olympic Cross-Country Championships. He covered the course at Stockton State College in Pomona (N.J.) in 16 minutes, 16 seconds.

> The win enabled him to make the Mid-Atlantic qualifier, to be held Nov. 18 at Daniel Boone State Park in Birdsboro, Pa.

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