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Sports

## NP girls water polo wins state title

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By KEV HUNTER

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TOWAMENCIN — While many in the area were trying to deal with Saturday's freak October snow storm, North Penn was busy doing what it almost always does this time of year, and that's winning a state title in high school girls water polo.

The Maidens' offense simply overwhelmed rival Wilson in the second and third quarters Saturday night in the state final, as North Penn pulled away to a 9-4 lead and then held on for a 9-7 victory in front of a boisterous crowd at The Rick Carroll Natatorium.

"I believe this is the most balanced team that I have coached," said Maidens coach Bill Bartle, who has guided North Penn to four state titles in the past six years. "You have Brooke (Else), an outstanding player, and that's proven by her getting (Miss Water Polo), so teams really have to focus on Brooke, which leaves individuals open on the outside. And when you have arms like Brittney Patterson and Jenny (Halcovage), and Alex (Kajari) has a lot of nice moves, it presents a lot of trouble."

Wilson never figured out how to stop the Maidens.

North Penn went on an 8-1 run, scoring from just about everywhere — even the middle of the pool, to pull away by the third quarter.

"Everyone shoots really well — not just from the hole. Everyone shoots well from the outside," Else said. "Everyone was nailing their shots after we got going."

Else, who racked up sevens goals in earlier-round wins over Villa Maria and North Allegheny, earned Co-Miss Water Polo honors along with Cumberland Valley's Hannah Sunday.

With the Bulldogs paying so much attention to Else in the final, Jenn Halcovage was simply on, pouring in four goals, Aspen Trautz scored twice, Tess O'Neill added a goal, and First-Team All-Staters Alex Kajari and Brittney Patterson each added a score.

North Penn's explosive display was magnified by the quality of opponent it was facing: Wilson, a great program in itself with a pair of First-Team All-Staters in Erin Timochenko and Laura Travers, and the Rookie of the Year in freshman McKenzie Klee, was unable to contain the Maidens.

And when North Penn's offense sputtered early, and Wilson built a 3-1 lead, sophomore goalie Kat Perkins made some big saves to keep the Maidens close until the attack found its way.

The Bulldogs showed their resolve by scoring three late goals to cut the deficit to 9-7 with a minute to play, but North Penn had built up way too big a cushion to puncture, and the celebration soon began.

"It feels great," Else said. "We worked so hard for that all year and we got it, and I'm so happy for the whole team...Alex, the other senior, and I have had three titles in our four years, so that feels great."

Girls Water Polo

PIAA State Final

North Penn 9, Wilson 7

Wilson 3 0 1 3 — 7

North Penn 1 3 4 1 — 9

North Penn goals: Tess O'Neill, Aspen Trautz 2, Alex Kajari, Brittney Patterson, Jenn Halcovage 4

Saves: Kat Perkins (NP) 9

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