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Colts win it again

By Keith Frederick, kfrederick@altoonamirror.com

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It's become a sort of tradition in District 6 girls volleyball.

Every year, the Class A finals come, and every year Northern Cambria comes out on top.

The Lady Colts notched their fourth consecutive district championship on Saturday afternoon, with a convincing win over Bellwood-Antis, 25-16, 25-14, 25-11, at the Altoona Area High School Fieldhouse.

According to Northern coach Mike Hogan, the Colts' current crop of seniors has never known a year that didn't end with a District 6 medal and a trophy raised high above their heads.

"We knew if we played our game, we could take these games today," senior setter Jennifer Valeria said. "It's just an awesome feeling. I can't believe it [happened four years in a row]."

Hogan said that his players started the season determined to continue their success

"They had a list of goals that they wrote down at the beginning of the year," he said. "I had nothing to do with it. This is just the [first] step for them."

The first step included a pretty dominant performance against the Lady Blue Devils. Bellwood had some success by feeding middle hitter Chelsea Wilson — the school's all-time leader in kills — in the first game. But Northern was able to key in on Wilson in games two and three and keep her from making a dent in its lead.

The final two games saw the Lady Colts live and die by the serve. Northern servers would have three or four point runs, only to let the Lady Blue Devils back in the game with service errors.

"We missed a few serves," Hogan said. "It's a fine line, though. You don't want to serve too soft and serve lollipops."

Bellwood could have used a few "lollipops" to get its confidence going. Coach Allison Clabaugh's third-seeded squad started the day by upsetting second seed West Branch in three games (25-18, 25-21, 25-23), but looked timid against Northern.

"I think we were a little nervous, knowing Northern Cambria's history," Clabaugh said. "For the past couple of years, they've been on (fire). It's intimidating, to be honest."

Clabaugh said the runner-up finish wasn't a disappointment and was a step in the right direction for the Lady Devils volleyball program.

"I was very, very pleased with making it (to the finals)," she said. "Coming in second in the district is great."

Now it's on to the PIAA Class A tournament for Northern, where the Lady Colts have reached the state finals three years running — winning the state title in 2005 to cap a 27-0 season. Hogan's squad figures to keep doing what got it to this position once again — play unselfish, team volleyball.

"It was the definition of a team today," he said. "We don't have (just) one player. We have a team, where everybody knows their role."

SERVICE POINTS

BELLWOOD: Ginter 1, Albright 5, Taylor 1, Wilson 3, Sharer 1, Wilt 2, Decker 1.

NORTHERN CAMBRIA: A. Rocco 11, Valeria 7, Sedlock 8, Kochinsky 13, Paronish 4, Daisley 4.

Semifinal results

Northern Cambria def. Penns Manor, 25-12, 25-12, 25-22

Bellwood-Antis def. West Branch, 25-18, 25-21, 25-23