



Pioneers' volleyball flexes muscles in conference **BC3 women win 1st WPCC title since 2012**

*By John Enrietto
Eagle Sports Editor*

BUTLER TWP — The Butler County Community College women's volleyball team has always been good. It's been a while since it's been great. That time may have arrived.

The Pioneers recently won their first Western Pennsylvania Collegiate Conference championship in three years. They took a 22-4 record into the Region XX Tournament in Maryland over the weekend.

BC3 hasn't posted a record like that since placing at nationals with a 28-4 mark in 2002.

"This is probably the deepest team I've ever had," coach Rob Snyder said. "We have talented players all over the court — a lot of girls who can do a lot of things."

That's saying something, as Snyder has compiled a 317-131 record in 17 years as Pioneer volleyball coach. The team's last trip to nationals was in 2009.

Freeport graduate Alexis Schrecengost is the lone player back from last year's team, which finished 16-11.

"The talent on this team is incredible. All of the girls come from really good high school programs,"

Schrecengost said. "It's been so much fun playing here and Rob is a great coach."

"Most of the teams we play have two or three good hitters. Our lineup is full of them. We talk on the court all the time, to the setters and passers, we find the good match along the net and take advantage of it."

Amanda Hewitt, BC3's only other sophomore, is also a Freeport graduate. She did not play last year, though she attended the college.

"I tried to talk her into it," Schrecengost said of Hewitt. "She admitted afterward that she should have played. She came out this year and it's been a blast."

A third player from Freeport, Macy Smolic, is a freshman middle hitter for the Pioneers. Lexie Graham, a freshman from Knoch, is the team's setter.

Snyder said the Pioneers began the season with Graham and Butler graduate Baylee Verner splitting time at setter.

"Once we gave Lexie the setter position all the time and moved Baylee to a hitter's position in the back row, we took off," Snyder said. "Both players thrive in their roles."

Other players, all freshmen, on the team include Seneca Valley graduates Mary Romano and Rachel Suddoth, Mars grad Cassie Berteotti, Karns City grad Kendra Kepple, Grove City grad Bella Chiodo, Christina Davis from Ford City and Bri Bedillion from Eden Christian.

"We lost Cassie to a torn ACL on the third play of our first match," Snyder said. "In past years, if we lost a player of that caliber for the season, we'd be done for. This group is deep and talented enough to withstand it." Smolic leads the team with 139 kills, followed by Schrecengost with 139, Davis 130 and Verner 114. Romano has 80 kills.

"(Freeport grad) Michaela Bowser played here and told me about the team," Smolic said. "Everybody here works so hard and they're all great players."

Graham has 514 assists from her setter's position. Verner had 103 before moving out of that role.

"It was affordable for me to come here and it's right down from my house," Verner said of the college. "We all came together from different schools, different programs, and we all got along right away. Everything just clicked."

Schrecengost said this is her final year of volleyball. She plans to further her education, but will no longer play the sport.

"It's time for me to move on to other things in my life," she said. "But playing on such a scrappy team, winning the WPCC Tournament ... That was a fantastic way to go out."