

By Ken Wunderley  
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UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. - The long wait for Lower Dauphin and coaches David Machamer and Doug Baker is over.

Lower Dauphin claimed its first PIAA boys volleyball title with a 3-1 win over defending champion Meadville in the Class 2A title match, held June 12 at Penn State's Recreation Hall.

"Doug Baker and I have been together since the beginning," said Machamer, referring to his assistant coach. "When we started the program 25 years ago, I was a JV coach. Two years later, I took over (as head coach) and coach Baker came along with me and hasn't left. That's unheard of to have an assistant that long. For us, it's truly amazing what these kids gave us. They gave us something we will never forget."

Lower Dauphin was making its fourth PIAA appearance, and third in a row, but had never made it past the quarterfinals until this year.

"It's just incredible to see all of us come together to do something amazing, to be the first state champs in school history," said senior middle hitter Cameron Snelbaker, who had to sit out with COVID-19 at the start of the season. "We started practices being quarantined and I was I was out for another two weeks. I was locked in my room for a month before I could actually go in and interact with these guys. It's incredible to see everyone here, to see everyone's faces."

Lower Dauphin (21-2) earned its PIAA berth by winning the District 3 title. The Falcons advanced to the title match with wins over District 12 third-place finisher Lansdale Catholic, 3-0 in the first round; District 12 champion Archbishop Wood, 3-0 in the quarterfinals; and District 3 third-place finisher Garden Spot, 3-0 in the semifinals.

"We thought we were going to be good, but never would have said district and state champions," Machamer said. "But these kids came together and played as a group through some very tough matches. They trusted each other. That was our big thing coming all the way through. Keep believing in each other and don't try to change things. And it worked for us."

Lower Dauphin held a small lead most of the first set until Meadville scored six straight points to build a 21-16 lead. The Bulldogs served for match point three times after holding a 24-21 advantage, but the Falcons scored six of the last seven points to pull out a 27-25 victory. Senior outside hitter Kaden Kirchhoefer recorded ten kills for Lower Dauphin.

"We let the first set slip away," Meadville coach Nick Bancroft said. "That was part of the outcome of the whole match. If we win that set, it's a different match. It was a big momentum switch."

Meadville middle hitter Charlie Waid agreed.

"We came out slow," Waid said. "It's my job to find a rhythm and establish the middle. It was one of those games where it wasn't clicking right away. They were a good defensive team. They were digging many of the balls I was hitting. It was challenging for all of us. It took a little while for us to get in rhythm. It was too late at that point."

Lower Dauphin took a commanding 2-0 lead with a 25-18 win in the second set. Six Falcons recorded kills in the set.

"We dug ourselves a hole and tried to come back out of it, but couldn't get out," Meadville setter Caden Mealy said.

Meadville finally got its offense going in the third set. Sophomore outside hitter Jackson Decker recorded six kills to lead the Bulldogs to a 25-17 win.

"They burst our bubble and our emotions got the best of us in the third set," Meadville outside hitter James Abraham said. "We had to control that. We just reset after that loss."

The third set was tied 15 times with the last coming at 20-20. At that point, Lower Dauphin scored five of the last six points to clinch the title with Kirchhoefer recording the final kill.

"These guys continued to battle from the very beginning to the very end," Machamer said. "We started off with quarantine and other things. Losing a season like they did last year and to do what they've done is truly amazing.

Meadville (20-1), the 2019 PIAA champion, earned its berth by winning the District 10 title. The Bulldogs advanced to the title match with wins over District 7 third-place finisher Ambridge, 3-0 in the first round; District 7 runner-up North Catholic, 3-0 in the quarterfinals; and District 3 runner-up York Suburban, 3-1 in the semifinals.

"We're all very fortunate to be here again, but unfortunate that it turned out this way," Waid said. "We came here expecting to win another championship, but you can't take this for granted. Meadville hasn't been to the finals many times and we were fortunate to be a part of two appearances. Despite the loss, it's still a blessing to be here."

Bancroft agreed.

"It was a good season, but the ending didn't go as we had hoped," Bancroft said. "I wouldn't trade any of these guys for anybody else. They worked really hard all season. That's a testimony to where they are now. It's a great accomplishment to get here and these kids were able to do it twice."

Lower Dauphin was led by: Kirchhoefer (21 kills), Abraham (13 kills), Richard Eber (12 kills, 4 blocks), Luke Gibbs (9 kills), and William Sierer (53 assists).

Meadville was led by: Decker (23 kills, 15 digs), Julian Jones (14 kills, 9 digs), Waid (10 kills), Cameron Schleicher (5 blocks), and Mealy (46 assists).