

VOLLEYBALL



Photos by Bill Johnson / Picture Day Pro!

The Pequot Lakes Patriots celebrate after winning the class 2A State volleyball championship against Rush City on Saturday at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul.

STATE CHAMPIONS

Patriots win first state volleyball title

BY CONRAD ENGSTROM  
Brainerd Dispatch

ST. PAUL

Pequot Lakes can call themselves champions.



After losing in a 3-0 sweep in last year's state finals, the Patriots flipped the script and swept the Rush City Tigers to win the Class 2A Final Saturday, Nov. 11, at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul.

"It was hard fought to get there, but I'm so proud of this team for accomplishing something that many girls have tried," Pequot head coach Chris Ganley said. "The program kept building and these girls finally did it. All the past teams can be proud because they helped build this and I'm so proud that they finally did it."

The feeling of losing the state finals last year was stuck in the back of the minds of the Patriots, which made the victory sweeter.

"It was absolutely surreal," senior middle-hitter Grace Hoffard said. "I think we all knew we had it from the start. Since we got down here. We knew we wanted it more and more. It's unbelievably amazing."



Pequot Lakes assistant coach Jenna Anderson instructs her players during the Class 2A State Championship on Saturday at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul.



Larsen



Hoffard

Setter Aubrey Larsen added: "I'm still soaking it in."

Pequot made it a little easier on themselves than it did in the quarterfinals and semifinals. In the previous two rounds, the Patriots fell behind 2-0 before coming back to win the next three sets.

"All we were doing was playing our hardest," Hoffard said. "We went for every ball, every tip, every hit and just played our hardest."

The Patriots landed three players on the Class 2A All-Tournament in Aubrey Larsen, Ella

Kratochvil and Grace Hoffard.

Kratochvil led Pequot's attack with 20 kills and 11 digs. Hoffard spiked nine kills and recorded four blocks. Larsen registered 27 set assists and 12 digs.

"(Kratochvil) is a great player," Rush City head coach Eric Telander said. "She just did a great job and was finding the angles. We were trying to keep her from going line and when we did she wasn't going line too often. She had a great match."

Rush City was led by Lydia Bengston with 15 kills and Ella Ferrie with 10 kills. The Tigers registered 26 hitting errors to Pequot's 13.

"Pequot played one heck of a game," Telander said. "It seemed like they were in every dang spot that we were trying to hit. So hats off to



Contributed / Anna Larson

The Pequot Lakes Patriots show their medals and state championship trophy.

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CHRIS GANLEY, PEQUOT LAKES VOLLEYBALL COACH

them."

In the third set, Pequot Lakes used both of its timeouts within the first six points. Kratochvil had a cut on her leg which needed medical attention after the first point and a quick 5-1 run by the



Pequot's Ella Kratochvil spikes the ball against Rush City during the Class 2A State volleyball championship on Saturday at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul.

Tigers forced another.

Without a timeout in its pocket, Pequot came back.

After trailing 12-6, the Patriots went on an 8-2 run to tie the match 14-14. Pequot grabbed its first lead of the third set at 17-16.

With the score tied 22-22, Pequot scored the last three capped off by none other than Kratochvil to be crowned state champions.

"The big thing was we have a strong group of

GIRLS HOCKEY

Lightning opened season Tuesday, plays Friday in Crosby

PEQUOT LAKES — The Northern Lakes Lightning girls hockey team was scheduled to open the season Tuesday, Nov. 14, at Duluth Marshall.

The Lightning are then scheduled to play their first home game against

Two Rivers at 7 p.m. Friday, Nov. 17, at the Hallett Community Center in Crosby.

Northern Lakes travels to Eveleth for a game Tuesday, Nov. 21, before playing its first home game at the Breezy Point Hockey Center on Tues-

day, Nov. 28.

Returning letterwinners include senior Kiana Landt; juniors Jasmyr German, Corah Meschke, Ava Merta, Jenna Stoerzinger and Geselle McLaughlin; sophomores Natalie Stueven, Rayna Hopia and Lilly Logelin;

and freshmen Sarah Maroney, Kambria Thompson and Myah Reuper. One other player who could contribute is Karly Haff.

"We are young, with only two seniors and a freshman goalie tandem," said head coach Bryan

Boreen. "Our core returning defense will hold us together, while relying heavily on two lines to put up some big numbers."

Last season, the No. 4 Lightning were upset by No. 5 Breckenridge-Wahpeton in the Section 6A

quarterfinals. Northern Lakes finished 9-16 overall. The Lightning were 4-0 in Mid-State Conference play.

Assistant coaches are Kristen Harsha, Jay Hopia and Joe Herda.

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