By Ken Wunderley

Tri-State Sports & News Service

The two most dominant teams in Class AAA over the past five years met in the PIAA title match on Saturday at Johnstown Richland High School.

Landisville Hempfield was making its fifth consecutive appearance in the Class AAA title match, while Parkland was making its third appearance in five years.

When the final point was scored, Parkland claimed its second PIAA crown with a 3-1 upset of the two-time defending champions.

"It feels great," said Brooke Robertson, a senior outside hitter for the Trojans. "Especially finishing out my senior year with that kind of record. I’m going to carry that with me the rest of my life. That’s a great accomplishment."

Parkland finished the season with a perfect 26-0 record, despite having only two seniors - Robertson and Kristin Keck - in its starting lineup.

"We don't put a ceiling on expectation," said Parkland coach Mike Krause, when asked about his young squad. "At practice these kids are hanging out with each other through sport. They’re happy to be a part of it and there’s no class system. On the court, there’s no grade level. I think that gives the younger kids a sense of belonging and the older kids a sense of leadership."

The match opened with Hempfield, PIAA champs three of the past four years, jumping out to a 12-5 advantage and held on for a 25-21 victory.

"A lot of the points [Hempfield] scored in the first set were due to our mistakes," coach Krause said. "We gave them a lot of points with serving errors."

Parkland rebounded with a narrow 25-22 victory in the second set.

"We started off a little slow, but we got out of that really fast," said Trojans junior setter Kristin Krause, the coach's daughter who had 38 assists. "We just stayed together and played as hard as we could, and it worked out in the end."

Both teams struggled with consistency in the third set, which saw 10 lead changes. But it was the Trojans who capitalized most, scoring 10 points off Black Knight errors. Parkland claimed a 25-20 victory in the set and took a 2-1 advantage in the match.

"We haven't seen consistent big blockers like that all year," Hempfield coach Andrew Olree said. "We were prepared for it but we didn't execute. Our passing wasn't on, so the ball got set tight or off the net making swings difficult."

Parkland dominated the fourth set, posting a 25-10 victory, to claim the title in four sets.

"This was really important for us," said Robertson of capturing the state title. "We had a really bad postseason last year, so we had to prove that we are a better team. This was our goal from the beginning of the year. We ended on a good note with a perfect season."

Parkland claimed its first PIAA title in 2011 with the same record of 26-0.

"This team is a great example of unselfish kids making several sacrifices and believing in one another," coach Krause said. "We have a great respect of what Hempfield is. Beating them says a lot."

Siena Salvaggio led Parkland with 15 kills, while Robertson added 12. Sam Webber and Erika Foose each had five blocks for points.

"This is a dream come true," Salvaggio said. “I think we worked very well as a group today.”