By Ken Wunderley

Tri-State Sports & News Service

 It's six and counting with the North Allegheny girls volleyball program.

 The Tigers claimed a sixth consecutive PIAA Class 4A title with a 3-1 win over Garnet Valley in the last of four championship matches held Saturday at Cumberland Valley High School.

 The only school to win more consecutive titles in PIAA history is Norwin, as the Knights won eight straight from 1976-83.

 "This is so special to be able to win again with this group of seniors," said North Allegheny senior setter Mia Tuman, an Ohio State University recruit. "We didn’t play well in the first game, but a bit of motivation from losing (to Pine-Richland) in the WPIAL championship was a reminder to us that we don’t like losing."

 Garnet Valley gave North Allegheny all it could handle in the first set. The Jaguars built a five-point lead before North Allegheny tied the match at 20. The two teams then traded points and both served for set point until the Jaguars pulled out a 28-26 victory.

 "Our passing and serving wasn't good in the first set," North Allegheny coach Russ Hoburg said. "They were in system and getting the ball to (freshman outside hitter Sara) Wood and their opposite (Kelly St. Germain).

 The second set was also tight as neither team led by more than four points. A pair of unforced errors gave Garnet Valley set point at 24-22. North Allegheny held off defeat by scoring four straight points, with four different players scoring during the winning rally in a 26-24 victory.

 "Winning that set would have made all the difference," Garnet Valley senior setter Maddie Wood said. "If we win that set, the entire course of the match changes. We win that set, we could’ve swept them."

 Instead, North Allegheny took charge in the third set by scoring the first eight points and completely dominated the Jaguars, 25-8. Mia Tuman had four kills and a serving ace for the Tigers.

 "We just kept talking about relaxing and playing our game," Tuman said. "Once we did, we played well. The third game might have been our best game all season."

 There was little doubt who would win the fourth set. Great Valley kept it close early in the set, but the Tigers increased their lead until it reached double figures. Senior Ella Zimmer had the honor of recording the final kill in a 25-22 victory.

 "I think our defense was incredible, getting all those digs really put the momentum on our side," said Tigers senior opposite Ella Deeter, who had 14 digs. "Once we got into system we kind of steamrolled through. They couldn’t stop us."

 North Allegheny was making its 11th appearance in a title match and won for the ninth time. The only school with more PIAA titles is Norwin with 12 titles.

 Garnet Valley was making its second title appearance and first since pulling one of the biggest upsets in PIAA history in the 2016 final.

 “We played so well in the first game and into the second game. We kind of felt deflated after losing the lead in Game 2 and ultimately the game," Garnet Valley coach Mark Clark said. "We came out so flat in Game 3 and put ourselves in a hole that you can’t dig out of against teams as good as North Allegheny. They just came at us in Game 4, as well. My girls fought and battled all season and had a great year."

 North Allegheny earned its PIAA berth by placing second in the WPIAL. The Tigers advanced to the title match with wins over State College, 3-0 in the first round; Landisville Hempfield, 3-1 in the quarterfinals; and Pine-Richland, 3-1 in the semifinals.

 Garnet Valley claimed its PIAA berth by winning the District 1 title. The Jaguars earned its berth in the finals with wins over Central York, 3-0 in the first round; Lower Merion, 3-0 in the quarterfinals; and Parkland, 3-1 in the semifinals.

 "This group of seniors is special. It is so nice to be a part of their success," Tigers coach Russ Hoburg said. "They have worked so hard to be part of the tradition of NA volleyball. We are a very senior-laden team, but we have some players who didn’t see much time tonight that are just as good as our seniors. They just have to wait their turn."

 North Allegheny had four players who recorded double-digit kills. Tuman led the team with 14 kills, 41 assists, two blocks, and 12 digs. Ella Zimmer had 11 kills, while Deeter and Carissa Treser had 10 each. Deeter also had six blocks, while Caroline Curran had 25 digs.

 Sarah Wood led Garnet Valley with 16 kills, while teammate Kelly St. Germain had 14. Madison Wood, Sarah's older sister, had 38 assists in her final game.

 North Allegheny used 12 players in the title match, but will lose more than half of them to graduation.

 "We have seven seniors and they all played a significant role in the championship match," Hoburg said. "We will miss them. Fortunately, we have a nice group of girls in the wings waiting for their chance to play."

 Garnet Valley used 11 players in the title match and eight are seniors.

 "I'm very proud of what my girls were able to accomplish," Clark said. "We're losing a very talented group of seniors, but have some talented players stepping in. We will be competitive next year."