

BC3 volleyball team set to defend 4 consecutive WPCC titles Saturday

Oct. 17, 2019



Maddy McAninch (5), a freshman libero on the Butler County Community College volleyball team and a Freeport High graduate, is shown during a Pioneers' match against Mercyhurst North East on Monday, Sept. 16, 2019, in BC3's Field House. McAninch leads players on all 100 National Junior College Athletic Association Division III squads with 7.44 digs per set entering Saturday's Western Pennsylvania Collegiate Conference tournament at BC3.

(Butler, PA) Maddy McAninch and her Butler County Community College volleyball teammates have covered a lot of ground, coach Rob Snyder said of a Pioneers team off to its second-best start since 2013 and looking to defend four consecutive Western Pennsylvania Collegiate Conference championships as the top seed in Saturday's post-season tournament.

McAninch, a libero and Freeport High graduate, leads players on all 100 National Junior College Athletic Association Division III squads with 7.44 digs per set – a defensive statistic that reflects a player receiving the ball from an opponent, and passing the ball to a teammate.

McAninch is one of seven freshmen on a BC3 team that is 14-3 – the program's best start since a 16-1 record in 2016 – and that earned a first-round bye in Saturday's five-team championships at BC3's Field House.

The Pioneers will face the winner of Saturday's 10 a.m. first-round game between the fourth-seeded University of Pittsburgh-Titusville (2-12) and the fifth-seeded Community College of Beaver County (2-22) in the semifinals, which begin at noon. No. 2 seed Community College of Allegheny County-Boyce (9-3) plays No. 3 seed Penn Highlands (6-7) in the other noon semifinal.

The championship is scheduled for 2:30 p.m.

BC3 has won 10 WPCC crowns under Snyder and 15 since 1977.

McAninch's Division III-leading digs per set is "huge" for a BC3 team whose game plan in 2019 has been focused on defense, Snyder said.

"If you are going to rely on your defense, you have to have those types of players," Snyder said. "And luckily we have really good defensive players."

Sophomore outsiders Makenzie McDowell, of Knoch, is 14th in the NJCAA in digs per set with 5.07, and Kaylee Ebbert, of Mars, is 17th with 4.88.

"Our two outside hitters have worked very hard to get better," Snyder said. "Neither of them were really hitters in high school. So they have had to come a long way and they work very hard at it, and have made a big improvement, which has been important to us."

As is having a libero in McAninch, where "we've been weak because we didn't have that player," Snyder said. "So having that one person out there who's consistent all the time has been a huge, huge advantage for us."

McDowell leads BC3 with eight blocks, followed by middle hitter Abby Kopac, a sophomore from Knoch, with seven. Kopac leads the Pioneers with 116 kills, and Morgan Malinski, a freshman setter from Slippery Rock, has a team-high 447 assists.

Malinski, Snyder said, is "very energetic. She gets to every ball. She is just a really, really hard worker."

BC3 will have to work hard in winning its fifth WPCC title in a row, Snyder said.

“When we play with energy and go after balls and be the defensive team, the aggressive defensive team, we do well,” Snyder said. “Sometimes we get a little passive, and you know you are going to be in trouble by letting the balls hit the floor. So it’s good to maintain that intensity level.”