

BC3 women's basketball squad holds off rally, wins 4th WPCCC title in 5 years

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The Butler County Community College women's basketball team on Saturday won its fourth Western Pennsylvania Collegiate Conference championship in five years by beating Westmoreland County Community College 43-36 at BC3's Field House. Kneeling, from left, Michaella Roth, Casey Kretzer and Skye Wessel. Back row, from left, head coach Dick Hartung, assistant coach Kathy Wood, Nicole Hartman, Alexis Barnhart, Jenna Heitzenrater and assistant coach Jordan Sager.

(Butler, PA) The Butler County Community College women's basketball team survived its slow start and Westmoreland County Community College's fast finish Saturday to claim the 2020 Western Pennsylvania Collegiate Conference championship and its fourth in five years.

Guards Casey Kretzer and Michaella Roth scored 17 points each, and BC3 capitalized on 20 Wolfpack turnovers in defending its 2019 title and posting a 43-36 victory at BC3's Field House.

"It's the first checkoff," said Pioneers coach Dick Hartung, whose squad next weekend in Youngwood will chase the program's fourth National Junior College Athletic Association Division III Region XX crown since 2007 and first since 2016.

Kretzer, a Knoch High School graduate and BC3's leading scorer with a 16.2 points per game average, was named Saturday to the WPCC All-Conference Team.

Skye Wessel, a freshman and Seneca Valley graduate, had eight rebounds for the Pioneers and Alexis Barnhart, a freshman from Butler, had seven. Mackenzie Markle led the Wolfpack with 14 points and Julea Claycomb, with 11 rebounds.

The Pioneers missed nine of their first 12 shots from the field and trailed 10-8 after a first quarter in which Kretzer began 0 for 5.

"Which," said Roth, a freshman and Slippery Rock High graduate, "was very unusual for her."

"I just wasn't setting my feet," Kretzer said. "The shots just weren't falling. You just have to keep shooting. Eventually they will start falling."

The Pioneers faced their largest deficit, at 8-2, until Roth sank a 3-pointer from the left wing with 5:28 remaining in the first quarter.

BC3 took its first lead, at 13-11 and one it would not relinquish, more than 14 minutes into the game when Kretzer hit a 3-pointer from the left wing. Roth followed with a 3-pointer from the right wing to give BC3 a 16-11 edge with 5:05 left in the first half.

The Pioneers would lead by as many as 19 points – "the hardest thing to do is to play with the lead," Hartung said, "and we got a little complacent" – before the Wolfpack scored 14 unanswered points and pulled to a 41-36 deficit with 50 seconds remaining.

"They were kind of close," said BC3 sophomore forward Jenna Heitzenrater, a Slippery Rock High graduate.

"We thought if we could keep them to around 40 points, we had a chance to win," Wolfpack coach James Brymn said.

"They had a good run on us at the end," said Kretzer, a sophomore who in the waning seconds sank the fourth and fifth of her five successful free throws in as many attempts to secure BC3's victory and her second WPCC title in a row.

"It's awesome," Kretzer said. "This shows all the hard work that we put into the season."

BC3 will be joined by Anne Arundel Community College, Arnold, Md.; Prince George's County Community College, Largo, Md.; and host Westmoreland County Community College in the NJCAA Region XX tournament. BC3 won Region XX crowns in 2007, 2011 and 2016.

BC3's men's basketball team topped Westmoreland County Community College 97-85 in a WPCC quarterfinal on Friday night, then fell 123-90 in the semifinals to the Community College of Allegheny County on Saturday.

Julian Sanks, a freshman from Knoch, led the Pioneers in the semifinals with 31 points, and Andrew Yonker, a sophomore from Butler, had 28.

Dom Schmidt, a sophomore from Butler, added 16 points and led the Pioneers with 12 rebounds in the semifinals.