

# Unlikely hero leads Trojans to second Class AA crown

## Senior lends edge in title-game victory

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By Mike White, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Call it North Catholic's version of a born-again Christian.

When the North Catholic boys won the WPIAL Class AA championship a year ago, Christian Wolosik wasn't good enough to get in the game. When North Catholic repeated as champions Saturday afternoon, Wolosik had the game of his life.

Wolosik, a 6-foot-1 senior forward, did a little bit of everything for North Catholic and was the primary reason the Trojans edged Rochester, 51-48, to win the Class AA title at Duquesne University's Palumbo Center.

Wolosik had a career-high 20 points and a team-high 13 rebounds. He made two 3-pointers, used a nice medium-range jumper to score a few times and was gigantic on the boards against a taller Rochester team. Wolosik's effort gave North Catholic a much-needed lift because leading scorer Jesse Long (19.5 points per game) made only 3 of 14 shots and was held to eight points.

North Catholic (23-2) won after Rochester (23-3) missed two 3-point attempts and an inside shot in the final few seconds.

"I thought that was Jesse in a [Wolosik] look-alike costume," joked North Catholic coach Dave Long, Jesse's uncle. "[Wolosik] performed like Jesse and did all the things Jesse normally does."

It was the fifth time in six games Wolosik scored in double figures, but none of his previous performances compared to this.

Was this really the same guy who couldn't get on the floor last year?

"I've been dressing him varsity since he was a freshman," Dave Long said. "He's been a tremendous practice player, but he's always been telling me he's not a basketball player. He says he's a baseball player. It's taken me 3 1/2 years to convince him he's a legitimate basketball player. I think the last two or three weeks, he has demonstrated he can really play the game of basketball."

Maybe the win took some of the pain away from last May when Wolosik was the losing pitcher in North Catholic's defeat in the WPIAL baseball championship.

"Before the game, I thought about [baseball] because that feeling was terrible," Wolosik said. "I didn't want that to happen again. ... I'm still more of a baseball player than basketball, but for one day I was basketball. Throughout the playoffs, I've been doing alright."

The loss kept Rochester from winning its first WPIAL title since 1983.

"We tried hard," Rochester coach Paul Long said. "We want a rematch."

Junior center Giovanni Ellis led Rochester with 11 points and seven rebounds. Junior guard E.J. Blackwell, who averages 18 points, was held to six and made only 2 of 14 shots.

Martin Long, Jesse's cousin and Dave Long's nephew, added 12 points for North Catholic.



Bob Donaldson/Post-Gazette

North Catholic's Jesse Long shoots over Rochester's Giovanni Ellis.

Rochester jumped to a 17-8 lead early in the second quarter, but North Catholic closed the half on an 18-6 run to take a 26-23 advantage at the break.

In the fourth quarter, Wolosik's two free throws put North Catholic ahead, 51-46, before Rochester's Terry Gettings scored to cut the deficit to three. North Catholic missed the front end of three one-and-ones in the final 30 seconds.

On Rochester's final possession, Ellis, an inside player, attempted a 3-point shot that was off target. After a miss on the rebound, Jasson Adamson got the ball for a 3-point attempt but it went off the backboard at the final buzzer.

"Jasson would probably be the most ideal player to shoot the first one, but when he didn't [Giovanni] had to try and take it," Paul Long said.

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