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Pioneer Valley Christian Academy girls volleyball sweeps Turners Falls in WMass Class D semifinals

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SPRINGFIELD - The energy was palpable inside the Pioneer Valley Christian Academy gymnasium Wednesday evening as the No. 1 Eagles and the No. 4 Thunder squared off in a semifinal match of the Western Mass. Class D girls volleyball tournament.

Ultimately it was PVCA who punched their ticket to the finals, sweeping Turners Falls. The set scores read 25-19, 25-13, and 25-13.

PVCA came in to the semifinals following a red hot regular season where they finished 16-1 and proceeded to sweep Ware in their quarterfinal matchup. Turners Falls finished their regular season with a record of 11-6, and also swept in their quarterfinal matchup against Pioneer Valley Regional.

The 2025 tournament marked Tuners Falls' fifth straight appearance in the tournament, having won the WMass championship in 2023. PVCA entered the tournament for the third straight year, having never made it past the semifinals in program history.

Both squads were eliminated in the semifinals of the WMass tournament last year.

This matchup also marked a rematch between the Eagles and the Thunder, as they met on October 10th, with PVCA sweeping them then as well.

The first set of Wednesday's match indicated the final would amount to anything but a sweep, as PVCA pulled out to an early 4-0 lead, but Turners falls came firing right back and evened the set at 5-5. Following the draw, the set remained airtight.

The largest lead was two points until the Eagles pulled ahead 22-19 in large part due to strong serves from Avelinn Baxter. The Thunder would call a timeout to regroup, but Baxter got right back to work from the service line and helped PVCA cement the set.

Bouyed by their first set victory, PVCA came out firing to start the second set. Brooke Beggs' two aces and strong serves helped the Eagles pull out to an early 7-0 lead.

This lead was large enough to hold as the Thunder were unable to claw back. The Eagles put away the second set and were staring down a trip to the WMass championship.

The third set opened close with the largest lead at two points in the early going. Eventually, back to back aces from junior setter Sadie Keegan helped the Eagles pull out to a five point advantage.

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Strong defensive play helped PVCA hold the lead and punch their ticket to the finals.

The Eagles were flying around the court all match in great communication and in perfect rhythm. This mental focus is something that coach Bethany Souza knows is key in the postseason.

“We’ve had some guest speakers come in to talk about different facets of sports and the mental being,” Souza said. “So we are making sure that we’re not distracted, we’re taking our deep breaths, and making sure that were focused.”

With the victory, PVCA punches their ticket to the WMass finals for the first time in program history, doing so in impressive fashion, as they knocked off a Turners Falls team that has experience going deep in these tournaments.

“We know that [Turners Falls] have done very well in Western Mass,” Souza said. “They have experience and we don’t. We haven’t made it past the semifinal rounds in school history, so this is very exciting for us.”

PVCA awaits the winner of the other semifinal match between Renaissance and Lee on Thursday at 6:00 p.m. for a finals date on Saturday with a start time still to be announced.