

Steinert vs. WWPS in a game that rivals Thanksgiving

By Rich Fisher

Fish4Scores.com

OCT. 30: You know it's big.

Dan Danaso actually compared it to the biggest.

"Our Thanksgiving day game (with Hamilton) is always the big game of the year for us," said the Steinert all-purpose offensive performer. "During the regular season we haven't really had a meaningful game except that one since I've been here."

Things have become so meaningful in this weekend's 2 p.m. home game with West Windsor-Plainsboro South, that they are discussing sports other than soccer in the halls of Steinert this fall.

"I'll tell you what, people are talking about football for the first time since we've been here," Danaso said. "People used to drive by and the buses would come by, the kids from middle school would yell 'Steinert stinks! You guys are terrible!'

"We'd try to block it out. But for the first time we're hearing 'Go Steinert!' There's still people who say this and that, but the attitude is really starting to change."

It will continue to change for the better if Steinert can extend its winning streak over the next eight days.

"These next two weeks are really big games for us to get in the playoffs, which is something we haven't done since 2003," noted Danaso.

The challenge starts Saturday, when revitalized Pirate team visits Steinert for what should be an outstanding game.

WWP-S comes in at 4-3 and is coming off impressive wins over WW-P North and Nottingham. The Spartans are 4-3 with four straight victories.

West Windsor is sixth in Central Jersey Group IV in power points with 74. Steinert, with one less game, is sixth in CJ III with 82. West Windsor can clinch a spot with a win, Steinert can put itself in a great situation with one.

Not to mention, the Spartans have a score to settle.

"Everybody wants to win this one," Danaso said. "West Windsor beat us pretty bad last year, so we all want it bad."

It won't be easy, however. The Pirates young offense has been slowly rounding into shape and had 308 yards of total offense against the Northstars. West Windsor also has an opportunistic defense that has a penchant for scoring points off turnovers.

"They're a really good team," Danaso said. "They have great linemen, they're big, strong, fast and physical. We'll have to control them. They have good backs both offensively and defensively. We just have to execute."

The Pirates are led by a three-headed ChrisBack-Attack – running backs Chris Matthews and Chris Jones and quarterback Chris Evans. Tall, rangy Jack Dennehy provides a dangerous receiver in single coverage.

But the Spartans have become the defensive scourge of the Colonial Valley Conference.

During its four-game win streak, Steinert has yielded just 329 rushing yards, 456 passing yards and 785 yards of total offense. That has computed into 27 points for the opposition, less than seven per game.

"We have a really great defense and they'll keep us in every single game," Danaso said. "Offensively we just have to execute, put a lot of time in with a very good plan game we'll be all right."

The Spartans have won their last two games by scoring just 13 points. Danaso is looking for that to improve.

"It's frustrating not to score three or four times a game, but it's nice to know we have a defense to keep us in every single game," he said. "But if we can score a few times and not punt the ball back every time, that's going to help us out."

"I feel like every week we're getting a little better. (Quarterback) Adam Riese is only a sophomore, but he's not playing that way. He's a great passer, he's starting to take over."

And if Riese and the offense continue to improve and the defense stays tough, Steinert hopes to take over its own playoff destiny.

