



Sean Clinedinst, who had two assists against Paul VI tonight, felt the Spartans weren't ready to play against the South Jersey squad (Photo by Dennis Symons Jr./purchase photos at www.dennissymons.com).

Three levels of flat leave Spartans stranded on the side of the ice tonight

By Tony Piscotta

Fish4Scores.com

Dec. 22: The Steinert hockey team is much-improved this season but it has not yet reached the point where it can just show up and put games in the win column.

"We were flat, we came out flat, and we stayed flat," said first-year coach Ryan DeClerico following Steinert's 8-4 loss to Paul the VI at Mercer County Rink Thursday night.

After suffering their first loss of the season last week against Robbinsville a week ago, the Spartans (4-2-0) were playing their first game in eight days.

Senior Sean Clinedinst, who assisted on two of Steinert's four goals, admitted that the Spartans weren't ready to play. But he wasn't about to use the long lay off as an excuse.

"We know what we have to do against a strong team and we didn't come prepared to play,"

said Clinedinst.

The Spartans fell behind quickly as Paul VI (3-3-1) scored the game's first two goals.

Jeff Hurley opened the scoring 54 seconds into the game. After being stopped by Steinert goalie P.J. Alexiadis moments earlier on a wraparound attempt, Hurley again found himself alone with the puck behind the Spartans net and slid the puck in the net before Alexiadis could react.

Paul VI made it 2-0 with 8:34 left. Steinert's Andrew Dudich slid to block a cross ice pass but the puck ended up on the stick of the Eagles' Alec Weisensee, who slipped a pass to a wide open Michael Basileo who converted the tap in.

Steinert's Joe Konrath, who would finish with a hat trick to stretch his goal-scoring spree to 13 goals in the last five games, scored twice to even the score.

With 2:54 remaining in the first he snapped a quick shot from the left circle past junior Mark Mondile to get the Spartans on the board. He then took a pass from Clinedinst in center ice and skated in on a breakaway; beating Mondile with a deke to the backhand.

"We got some energy after that, they were two nice skating plays by Joey, but then we got back to making the same mistakes," said DeClerico. "We were clearing the puck blindly up the boards, allowing them to re-group in our zone. Then we were throwing the puck away and then we'd get tired in our own end."

Any hopes that the Spartans would take the game into the first period break with a tie were dashed when Paul VI scored less than a minute after Konrath's second goal. Junior Mike Chester dug the puck out from the far right hand corner and made a quick pass that Paul VI's Vinny DeFeo deflected into the net.

Steinert also took several uncharacteristic penalties, two of which led to the next two Eagles' goals. A roughing minor at the end of the first period led to the Eagles' fourth score - a power play goal on a point shot from Rich Reustle early in the second. And a slashing penalty midway through the second led to the Eagles' fifth goal just twenty seconds later when a point shot by Zach Mangaro was deflected on the way to the net; giving Paul VI a 5-2 lead it would not relinquish.

"We took some dumb penalties, myself included," said Clinedinst. "I retaliated when I shouldn't have. We should know better."

It was an Eagles' mistake, a turnover at the blue line, which led to Steinert's third goal and gave the Spartans some brief hope, making the score 5-3 as the two teams went to the locker room.

Dudich, a senior, forced a turnover at the Paul VI blue line and after making a deke at the right face off circle snapped a shot past Mondile.

But the Spartans would get no closer as Paul VI's Chester and Basileo sandwiched goals around a breakaway tally by Konrath and Hurley put the icing on the cake with a short-handed, empty net goal from his own blue line with 1:22 left in the game.

Despite the fact that Steinert had just four seniors in the lineup due to the absence of defenseman Carston Raab, Clinedinst did not feel the youth of the team was a factor.

"I don't think so," he said. "We have a lot of guys on this team who play travel hockey and they know how to get ready to play and what we need to do."

Fortunately for the Spartans, they will have an opportunity to get things turned around quickly - facing another quality opponent, West Windsor-Plainsboro North, on Friday.

"This was one loss and it was very embarrassing but we can't let it bother us in the long run," said Clinedinst. "We're a very hard working team . . . we have to come ready to play like we know how. We just have to leave this one behind us."

Despite giving up seven goals, junior goalie Alexiadis played fairly well for the Spartans, who were out-shot, 37-22. "He played well and made some big saves," said DeClerico. "We didn't give him a lot of support and we gave up more shots tonight than we have all year."