

Nov. 1 CJ IV Boys/Girls Soccer: Steinert boys up, girls down



Connor Moffat scored Steinert's first goal to tie the game against Monroe today (Photo by Mike Dill/purchase photos at www.michaeldillphotography.com).

Steinert stuns Monroe, gets congratulations from esteemed alum Donigan
By Rich Fisher
Fish4Scores.com

Nov. 1: Maybe there's something in the township water.

For the second time in as many days, a Hamilton Township soccer team sprung a major upset in the state tournament, as the 14th-seeded Steinert boys stunned third-seeded Monroe, 2-1, today in Jamesburg.

The Spartans win comes on the heels of the 15th-seeded Nottingham girls victory at Allentown Monday.

And when he heard the news today, one of Steinert's greatest players of all time couldn't have been prouder.

"That is awesome," said Rutgers coach Dan Donigan while driving to the hospital to see his newborn son, Brody Patrick. "I couldn't be happier for those guys. That's my alma mater, I always want to see them do good, so congratulations to them.

"I saw that match-up with Monroe and was a little concerned, but they went out and did it. I'm pulling for those guys. They're playing for the name on that jersey. Steinert soccer means a lot, and they did it proud today."

And they were undaunted by their seed, to say the least.

"In the state playoffs, there's a different mindset," said senior midfielder Ryan Lamarca, who scored the game-winning goal on a penalty kick midway through the first half. "No record matters and no seed matters. That's what everyone was thinking when we entered this game.

"There's no greater feeling than advancing in the state tournament. Last year we lost in the second round to Freehold, so hopefully we can get over the hump this year and go all the way. We are much better than our (6-8-2) record says, and each player knows that."

Monroe (12-6-1) had the advantage of playing at home on its turf field, something Steinert has only done a handful of times this year.

The Falcons tallied first when Mike Mischler scored unassisted 17 minutes into play. Approximately eight minutes later, Lamarca slotted a perfect ball to Connor Moffat, who put it in the lower corner.

Five minutes after that, Derek Shearer sent a free kick into the box and a Steinert player was elbowed in the back and taken down, which set up the PK. Lamarca buried it with his regular tactics.

"I placed it in the upper right corner," he said. "That's my usual strategy because I feel with the pace that I hit a PK, it would be hard for most keepers to stop. (Goalie Ryan Horn) guessed the right way, but I was able to sneak it past him."

There was still a long way to go for a one-goal lead to stand up, but Steinert's senior defensive unit of goalie Devon Downs (nine saves), Shearer, Zach Gates, CJ Harvell, Xavier Ceballos, Pat Remboski and John Powers held tight along with sophomore Zach Castaldo.

"They played very well," Jacobs said. "For the most part, they played well in the back."

Lamarca seconded that motion.

"Our defense played tremendous," he said. "Devon had a great game, he stopped a lot of shots that could have been goals. It was a total team effort. Each player knew what they had to do going on that field, and we did it.

"Both teams came out with high intensity. Monroe was a tough opponent, they had some good, skilled strikers but our defense stayed strong."

Jacobs felt a mix of calm and urgency by his veteran lineup helped as well.

"In the state tournament you look to the seniors to lead the way," he said. "It was evident that they were not going to let their season end today.

"Nine of our starting 11 are seniors. I think that helped when we went down early. The team didn't panic. We kept our composure, never gave up, and fought until the final whistle."

When that whistle blew, every Spartan on the field wore a big smile.

As did one former Spartan, who took time out from a new baby and preparation for the Big East Tournament to exult in his alma mater's triumph.

Spartan girls can't pull an upset of their own as Freehold Township wins

The 5th-seeded Steinert girls were hoping to also pull an upset at 12th-seeded Freehold Township, but it was not to be as a lack of finishing hurt the Spartans again in a 2-0 loss.

Steinert finished the season at 8-7-3, and were shut out in each of their last two games by West Windsor-Plainsboro North in the counties and Freehold (13-1-3) today.

Marisa DeMonte scored both goals for Township, one in the first half and another in the second. The shots were fairly even, with Steinert getting off seven on goal while Briyanna Femia made six saves for the Spartans.

Steinert nearly scored early in the game when Katelyn Becker slotted a pass to Mollie Coyne, but the shot went over the goal. The Spartans controlled much of the first half but Freehold got one in against the run of play, then put it away in the second half.