

Round 53: Thanksgiving Q&A with Hamilton West players



Hamilton's Karif Collier exults during last year's Thanksgiving game, while Spartan fans Rich Giallella and Bob Hutchinson look on and an apathetic Ron "Yack" Yacyk checks to see if the hot dog line has gotten any shorter (Photo by Donna Brihn).

Hornets talk turkey about long-standing rivalry game with Steinert

By Rich Fisher

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Nov. 23: *The following is a Q&A with several Hamilton West football players concerning Thursday's annual Thanksgiving Game with Steinert (Unfortunately, Ruben Desane and Greg Williams will miss the game with injury).*

F4S: What does Hamilton-Steinert mean to you?

Joe Avanzato: This game means everything to us. It's the biggest game of our season without question, especially for our seniors

because it's our last. There's no comparison to this, it's the kind of game you dream about being a part of.

Greg Williams: The Steinert-Hamilton game isn't a game like any other. This is the biggest rivalry game in the district, I believe. I've waited my whole life to play in this particular game. Too bad I'm going to have to wait one more. This is our championship game.

Mark Mckenzie: The Steinert and Hamilton game means a lot to me because it's a great rivalry match-up and both teams always get so hungry to face each other.

I do have memories when I watched this game. I watched West lose to them before and I'm trying to keep our winning steak alive during the years I'm playing for West. This game is one of the most memorable ones out of all the others so it's really important to the team.

Sal Vaccaro: To me the game means a lot. It's a tradition at Hamilton West and should be taken very seriously. When we walk on that field we are representing the former football players who passed through West over the years and it's a very emotional game for me personally. Especially now that it's my senior year and it's my last time I have to play them ever in my life. I think for any other Hamilton West player the only game that even comes close is against Nottingham.

Ruben Desane: Steinert and Hamilton is the most important game of our season. No matter how far we got and how our season went, this game is a game where no one will ever forget.



Sal Vaccaro feels the Hornets are not only playing for themselves, but for all the other players who ever wore a Hamilton football uniform on Thanksgiving day (Photo by Donna Brihn).

When I was about eight-years-old I would hear and see the crowd roaring, the referees blowing the whistles, cars filed up for many blocks. Family, friends, and relatives come watch this intense game. This game is not just a regular game. It is a game is about tradition, pride and commitment.

F4S: With Steinert still in the playoffs, this is more like your state championship game. Do you think that could make you guys hungrier? Or when it comes to Steinert-Hamilton, does that not even matter because of the tradition?

Mark Mckenzie: When they got into the playoffs that made us hungrier to beat them.

Ruben Desane: With Steinert in the playoffs it makes us hungrier to get a win. This game is intense. Tradition gives you a boost in this game. Us beating them before their championship game would be the happiest moment for our Hamilton Hornets. We are family and we will fight 'til the end if you're in the championship game or not. Hamilton football has heart. And to get a win for our seniors builds up the bond more between the school, community and the football players.

Joe Avanzato: This is very much like our championship game. With a win over Steinert we get a (WJFL Valley) division title and the Hamilton trophy back in our possession. And I think with Steinert in the playoffs or not, we're still hungry for a win against them.

Sal Vaccaro: Honestly, we are hungry to win every game on our schedule. Yes it's tradition but if it's on the schedule then it's meant to be won. Like coach (Mike "The Golf Pro") Papero says "I would do anything to have another chance to face that team in green just one more time" and now I know what he means.

Greg Williams: I know the team is more than hungry and ready for this game. The tradition is another reason that we are excited for this game.

F4S: What challenges does Steinert present to you guys?

Sal Vaccaro: Their ability to spread teams out on offense and force quarterbacks to make mistakes when they are on defense. But I have confidence in my team that we can pull through this game successfully. We have great coaches and great athletes on our team. We know how to win and we'd like to get our last one of the season on the best day possible.

Joe Avanzato: They have a very good offense with a lot of dangerous weapons, and their defense has been playing pretty good lately.

Mark Mckenzie: The challenge they present us is with their passing game. So if we stop their passing game they have to resort to running the ball and hopefully we will be able to capitalize on that.

Greg Williams: They have a very good passing game and a tough defense. I think if we play the way we know how we will come out on top at the end of the day.

Ruben Desane: Steinert has couple challenges they bring to the table. We've been watching film, looking for their weak spots. Their spread offense has been impressive throughout the year. There key receiver (Vanel Dossous) is only a junior. But we are ready for this team and HUNGRIER then EVER. I have a concussion but I believe whoever fills in my position will not only have heart but be physically tough no matter what.