

Nov. 24 Thanksgiving Football: A Spartan feast



Vanel Dossous hauls in a perfectly thrown pass from Adam Riese for a 50-yard touchdown catch in the first quarter of today's game at Hamilton (Photo by Dennis Symons Jr./purchase photos at www.denissymons.com).

Adam paints another master-Riese as Spartans enjoy record setting win

By Rich Fisher

Fish4Scores.com

Nov. 24: No Steinert football team ever won a state playoff game or reached the state finals.

Until this year.

And no Spartan team ever scored 40 points on Thanksgiving.

Until today.

It seems every time Steinert takes the field lately it's making some kind of history and today was no different as the Spartans steamrolled to a 40-22 win over Hamilton in the 53rd Annual Thanksgiving Day game between the two township rivals.

The game was not that close as Steinert scored on all six of its first-half possessions to take a 40-6 halftime lead. Coach Dan Caruso put in the subs on offense for the entire second half and began filtering in defensive reserves during the third quarter.

"This means a lot for all the seniors," said receiver/cornerback Jordan Dunn, who caught touchdown passes of 63 and 32 yards. "It just feels great."

Quarterback Adam Riese was unstoppable, completing 10 of 15 passes for 272 yards and what is believed to be a school Thanksgiving record five touchdowns in the first half. For his efforts Riese earned the Rich Fornaro Award as Steinert's Most Valuable Player.

"My confidence is all the way up there right now," Riese said. "With the receivers I have, the running backs, the linemen. All our confidence is at an all-time high. Things are just really clicking."

Steinert (9-2) tied the undefeated 1966 team for most victories in a season, and broke the school record for points against Hamilton, which was set in a 38-6 win in 1967. The Spartans came within one point of tying the Hornets series' record of 41 points in a game set three years ago.

By halftime, Steinert had outgained the Hornets 331-105, with 67 of those yards coming on one play for West.

Tons of records would have fallen had Caruso not rested the regulars to keep them preserved for Saturday's Central Jersey Group III championship game against Neptune.

And Steinert answered any questions about looking past this game to next week with its first-half explosion.

"We didn't do that at all," defensive lineman Amir Averhart said. "We've been talking about West since the beginning of the season. We were really prepared mentally, physically, we executed it all.

"We only had two days to prepare but we kept pushing and kept telling each other, pushing each other and be the best we could be," guard Shaiful Ali said. "We wanted to be 9-2. We didn't want to lose this one. This was one of our state games."

The game started in a bad way for Steinert, as the opening kickoff bounced off Jarius Prather and into the hands of Izel Key, which gave Hamilton possession at the Steinert 40.

"I said 'Here we go, oh boy,'" Caruso said with a laugh. "I thought it was gonna be one of those days but thankfully our defense was able to stop them and the offense was able to go back down the field and I said 'OK, this is where we want to be.'"

Lineman Matt Parmigiani had no such concerns after the opening kickoff.

"Not really," he said. "We have faith in our guys. We got a stop and got our offense back on the field."

But not in great position, as a punt had the Spartans starting at their one-yard line. They proceeded to tie a world record for longest drive, going 99 yards on just five plays.

Riese got it started with his only run of the day, 11 yards up the middle. Four plays later he hit Dunn with a mid-range pass and the receiver did the rest for a 63-yard touchdown pass.

It was that kind of quick-strike offense the Spartans showed all day, as it needed just 28 plays to score 40 points.

On its next possession, Hamilton went for it on fourth-and-one from its 42 but Mark McKenzie was stopped cold.

Three plays later Riese lofted a gorgeous pass into the arms of Vanel Dossous, who never broke stride en route to a 50-yard touchdown play. Bari Deptula then became the first female to score a Thanksgiving point with the PAT to make it 13-0.

It just kept going from there. Riese threw a 32-yard TD pass to Dunn and a six-yard TD strike to Keon White on a ball that was tipped by Hamilton's Jordan Williams. That made it 26-0.

"We just kept scoring and scoring and scoring," center Alex Amodie said. "We didn't have to punt at all and the smiles on our faces just got bigger with every touchdown."

Bret Stroman, who won the Bill McEvoy Award as Hamilton's MVP, tried to get the Hornets back in it when he caught a screen and took off on an impressive run for a 67-yard scoring play.

But a 23-yard completion to Dossous set up a 24-yard touchdown run by Jeff Mattonelli. Eddie Ashley's interception gave Steinert possession at the Hornet 25 with 20 seconds left and on the first play from scrimmage Riese found Mattonelli for a 25-yard TD pass.

“We figured if we could get up (by a lot) and get guys out, let’s do it,” Caruso said of going after one more TD before halftime. “We didn’t want to bring them out after a long halftime and risk injury.”

The second half was academic, although it did feature a 61-yard touchdown run by Stroman, who finished with 93 yards in his last high school game, and five-yard touchdown pass from Mike Soltesz to Damar Russell.

When it was over, Hamilton made no excuses and gave Steinert all the credit.

“They came out ready to play,” Stroman said. “We were sleeping in our secondary and they exposed what we did wrong.”

“They scored right away, we punt and pin them and they get a 99-yard drive,” coach Tom Hoglen said. “Fourth-and-one I thought we had to score points and tried to keep the ball out of their hands. We just didn’t get it done.

“Adam Riese is a good quarterback, they’ve got good receivers and they proved that today. They’re a good football team and they were just much better than us today.”

On both sides of the ball.

“We came in hard and we just kept hitting and hitting,” Steinert linebacker Kazier John said. “This means a lot to get this win. It just means a lot.”

It means more history.

Something Steinert is getting quite used to.