

Round 53: Thanksgiving Q&A with Steinert players



Last year, Steinert linebacker Alex Svecz (34) was chasing Jamie Williams (2) on Thanksgiving; this year the target will be Bret Stroman (Photo by Donna Brihn).

Nep-who? Spartans promise to concentrate on Hornets as main course

By Rich Fisher

Fish4Scores.com

Nov. 23: *The following is a Q&A with several Steinert football players concerning Thursday's annual Thanksgiving Game with Hamilton.*

F4S: What does Steinert-Hamilton mean to you?

Alex Amodie: It means the world to me. It is one of my championships because growing up I went to Grice Middle School with most of the West guys. I live right around the corner so I would always come to Steinert games growing up, especially this one. There is no bigger game in Hamilton than the Thanksgiving Day game.

Amir Averhart: It means a lot to me. It was my dream since my older brother played at Steinert to play in this game. The energy and everything is just great.

AJ Mostrangeli: This game to me is huge! Every Thanksgiving Day for the past 50-some (52) years, East and West would duke it out at what was normally the last game of the season, Winning this game gives us a chance for the (a share of) the township trophy, and personally I'm a man who believes in taking care of the smaller things first – first the township trophy, then the state trophy. I look forward to winning on turkey day every year and nothing is gonna keep me and my team from playing our best

F4S: Obviously, this is a little different for you guys this year. You are going for a state

championship, which is the ultimate. But will the tradition of Steinert-Hamilton make it easy to focus and not look past the Hornets?

Shaiful Ali: We made history. But winning the two playoff games won't affect how we approach Steinert-Hamilton. We're approaching this game like a playoff game. Everything is on the line, especially the township award. If we win all three schools get (a share).

Amir Averhart: I know the whole team is excited and focused for the championship game and also for the Thanksgiving game. Being that we are going for the state title for the first time ever in history we may be a little more anxious for that game but we are not letting our guard down for Thursday. We still obviously want to win as many games as possible

AJ Mostrangeli: That was one of my first concerns the day after we beat Woodbridge. Football is the kind of sport were anybody can beat anyone at anytime ESPECIALLY on the East vs. West Thanksgiving game. I know my teammates want to win and over the past few days we have proven that. We'll be ready for West on Thursday that's for sure!

Alex Amodie: Well yeah, obviously we have a huge state game coming up but the entire team is preparing for Hamilton West first. This has always been a huge game for us and we want to win this one before we start thinking about the state game.

F4S: You guys are going for an actual state championship, but this is pretty much Hamilton's state title game. Do you think that might give them an emotional edge in this game?



After throwing blocks while living the Thanksgiving experience last year, Steinert lineman Shaiful Ali (54) says there is no way he'd ever sit out this year to preserve himself for a state title game (Photo by Donna Brihn)

AJ Mostrangeli: I think West has every reason to be pumped for this game and they're sure looking to put up a fight. As far as an edge over us, I'm not so sure. I can promise you we will be just as pumped.

Shaiful Ali: I know that they've been preparing for this game for a while, but so have we. It's their last game of the season and we're approaching it as if it's ours.

Alex Amodie: I don't think it will at all, because this is a big game every year and we also have the chance to win (a share of) the town trophy. Mentally we are prepared for this game just as much as they are.

F4S: What Challenges do the Hornets present?

Alex Amodie: Obviously they have a good running back and a few key defensive players but

it's nothing we can't handle if we play as a team.

Shaiful Ali: The Hamilton Hornets are a good team. They have a good running game and also passing. They have a solid defense. It's going to come down to who wants it more.

AJ Mostrangeli: They have a very, very good running back. Bret (Stroman) is a great athlete who runs hard and makes plays. He, in my opinion, is their best offensive weapon and I can't wait to play against him.

Amir Averhart: The Hornets have a lot of skilled players on both sides of the ball. They could make the game go any direction.

F4S: What would you have done if Coach Caruso came up and said "I'm sitting you out of the Hamilton game so you don't get hurt for the state final?"

Amir Averhart: It would be such a weird feeling. For one I would be discouraged that I wouldn't be able to play that game my senior year. But then again I would feel good knowing the coaches believe they need me in the championship game. It has its pros and cons.

AJ Mostrangeli: (laughing) Our coaches would never lay down like that but that is a good question. I'd have to argue against them. Even though we have a chance to take the state title next, we – and TRUST ME WHEN I TELL YOU -- the Spartans did NOT forget the importance of the Thanksgiving Day game and neither did the coaches!

Shaiful Ali: I would say that there's no way I'm sitting in the East vs. West game. It's a rivalry game which is always exciting to play in.

Alex Amodie: Coach Caruso has already made the decision to play us but he did ask us if we wanted to play. As a whole team we said yes.