

Oct. 15 Football: Spartans win big!



Steinert's defense was one of the day's big stories at Trenton today, as Ryan Malagrino (56) and Darin Stokes close in on Trenton's slippery quarterback Jabree Jackson. AJ Mostrangeli (30) and Alex Svecz (34) are in the background (Photo by Mary Malone).

Steinert comes off chaotic bye week looking better than ever on the field

By Rich Fisher

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Oct. 15: Football teams always like to start strong in a game and set the tone on both sides of the ball, but for Steinert it was especially important today.

The Spartans were anxious to get the bad taste from their mouths of the last two weeks, which included the arrest of three players and plenty of negative controversy, most of which was undeserved.

Basically, the Spartans just wanted to play football.

And they returned from their bye week in style, rolling to a 37-14 victory at Trenton High in a game that was supposed to be a heck of a lot closer. And it wasn't even that close, as the Spartans took a 37-0 lead and tallied on their first two possessions.

"It was nice to get back to football," coach Dan Caruso said. "The bye week was nice but sometimes it's torture."

This one was as torturous as it gets.

“Yes,” Caruso said with a laugh. “It was.”

“We kind of put all that stuff behind us right away,” said Jeff Mattonelli, who had three catches for 58 yards. “We knew we had to take care of business. It was great to get back on the field today.

“All the captains and seniors talked about (ignoring the controversy) and everyone had that same mindset. We didn’t think about that, we didn’t want that to define our team, we just wanted to put that out of our heads right away.”

If Steinert’s effort today defined the team, it was a pretty positive definition.

“Every single week we’re coming together,” quarterback Adam Riese said. “More chemistry, offense, defense, special teams, everything.

“We scored in every aspect of the game today -- offense, defense, special teams. I can’t ask for anything more than that.”

The offense came from Riese and Company. Adam completed six of 11 passes for 137 yards and two touchdowns, and rushed for 68 yards and a score. Jordan Dunn caught a 48-yard TD pass on the game’s fifth play and Vanel Dossous had a 20-yard touchdown catch to complete the Spartans first-half scoring.

Tyler Zandomenego tallied on a one-yard run, sophomore Jarius Prather showed a glimpse of the future with 50 yards on eight carries and the offensive line blew Trenton’s huge linemen off the ball.

The defensive and special teams scores were all part of an ill-advised Trenton interception.

Lamere Burgess made the first pick off Riese this season, but should have just knocked it down to give Trenton possession at the 28. Instead, he went down at the two-yard line. Two plays later John Leverett nailed the ball carrier in the endzone for a safety and on the ensuing free kick Eddie Ashley returned it 58 yards for a touchdown.

“My blockers gave me some good blocks and I just ran behind them,” said Ashley. “It was all them, which made it easy for me.”

It all added up to nine points for the Spartans off their own turnover, and a 23-0 lead.

“That was great,” Ashley said. “I think that was the turning point. It put them on their backs and we had momentum and kept going the whole game.”

Ashley, who always seems to be in the middle of big plays, also had two fumble recoveries but again passed the credit.

“My guys put some hits on them,” he said. “The ball came out and I just fell on it.”

The game was another good one for the rejuvenated Steinert defense. The first string has now



Tyler Zandomenego heads into the endzone for Steinert's fifth and final touchdown of the day against Trenton (Photo by Mary Malone)

put up seven straight scoreless quarters (TCHS scored 14 off the second string in the fourth). AJ Mostrangeli had a sack in his second straight game and Alex Svecz and Enock Asante teamed for another sack.

“We’re playing good defense, the defense of old, which is good.” Caruso said. “We had a little fine tuning to do early in the season. We had to get a couple personnel things straight but we’re looking good right now.”

Steinert allowed just 51 yards of total offense in the first half and 79 over the first three quarters. Offensively the Spartans were balanced with 134 rushing yards and 137 on the ground.

Aside from scoring the nine points off the interception, the other big key was putting up 14 points in the game’s first 5:34.

“That’s huge,” Mattonelli said. “That’s a talented football team and we knew if we gave them an inch we’d be fighting all way, we knew we had to do that early.”

“I was actually very concerned about this game,” Caruso said. “You go against a team like Trenton High, they just came off a pretty bad loss to Notre Dame and our kids see that and say ‘We can beat this team,’ and we wonder if we might come out here and lollygag (yes, folks he said lollygag).

“But they didn’t do that. They came out, they played hard. We talked about a fast start and we got it going.”

And they never let up, using a short passing attack to combat Trenton’s heavy rushes and the windy conditions.

“We put our foot to the pedal,” Riese said. “We thought if we went down the field and scored it would knock it out of them a little bit. Scoring quick helped us, but it was a still a dogfight.”

A dogfight the Spartans couldn’t wait to get back into.

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Not to be lost in the day’s events was the first perfect day of sophomore kicker Bari Deptula’s brief career. Deptula was 5-for-5 on PAT’s on a windy afternoon.

“She’s been working with some guy who came in, and he obviously did a great job with her,” Riese said. “She did a great job today. I definitely see her growing tremendously. She can take a hit but she can sit there and just kick it in.”