

Oct. 18 Field Hockey



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Tori Stackhouse (left) celebrates her goal along with Ashley Gonzalez as Stackhouse celebrated Senior Day with a goal and assist in the Spartans win (Photo by John Blaine/purchase photos by e-mailing jbsportsphoto@aol.com).

Steinert edges 'Stars for township bragging rights and higher state seed

By Rich Fisher

Fish4Scores.com

Oct. 18: Tori Stackhouse ended her home field hockey career on a high note today, scoring

one goal and assisting on another in Steinert's 2-1 victory over visiting Nottingham on Senior Day.

Spartan coach Alyson Setzer felt it was only fitting.

"To watch Tori play today it just tells you how hockey goes in the township," the veteran coach said. "It takes them those four years of playing to get where they are.

"Other districts have the feeder systems, so somebody in those schools playing as well as Tori or Jackie (Coleman) or Ashley (Gonzalez), they're doing that in ninth grade. But it's nice to see these girls come in and get where they can be. I like that, that's one of the perks of coaching."

The Spartans' victory accomplished two things – it gave them the unofficial Hamilton Township trophy with wins over Nottingham and Hamilton, and it provided them an eighth seed in the Central Jersey Group III tournament while Nottingham will be ninth, although that is unofficial until the state releases the seedings.

As Setzer noted, nearly anyone can be in the states if they pay their money, but to finish in the top eight legitimizes it somewhat.

"This has been a tough year," Stackhouse said. "Just to be in states, I'm so happy, I'm so excited for it. I'm just glad to be there."

"The play takes on a new meaning and the girls seem to play better when they get into states," Setzer said. "They know that one loss and you're going home and for a lot of these girls they really don't want the season to end so we'll see what happens."

For many girls, their careers would end as Sara Diefenbach, Brittany Karch, Jessica Davala, Autumn Van Cleaf, Mackenzie Schlosser, Gonzalez, Shannon Clark, Stackhouse, Sara Baumgartner, Olivia Liedtka and Coleman were all honored on Senior Day.



Nottingham's Lyndsey Buckley, who had Nottingham's goal today, tries stickhandling away from Ashley Gonzalez (Photo by John Blaine/purchase photos by e-mailing jbsporsphoto@aol.com).

It also turned into Nervous Day as Nottingham (3-12-1) kept coming at the Spartans (3-10).

Steinert took a 2-0 lead when Stackhouse scored off a feed from Gonzalez, and Karch tallied off a pass from Stackhouse.

But Lyndsey Buckley stunned the Spartans by scoring with 14 seconds left in the half to give Nottingham some momentum.

"I really thought that would lift us up and carry us into the second half," said Nottingham midfielder Dalia Lopez.

But the Spartans had their Senior Day ceremonies during intermission, which seemed to get

their mind off the late score.

“That helped,” Stackhouse said. “It took a lot of pressure off.”

Amber Dietrich nearly regained Steinert’s two-goal lead when her shot whistled just wide early in the half and Nottingham thought it had the game tied with 11:36 left. But the official gave Aisha Torres a yellow card for interfering with the goalie, which negated the goal and left Nottingham short-handed for 10 minutes.

“I didn’t see exactly what happened but it was very nerve wracking because you think it’s in,” Stackhouse said. “You get so relieved but you can’t let down because they’re going to come back harder and get that score again and make it count.

“Nottingham did a great job. It was definitely a tough game.”

Nottingham held its own but could not tie it up as both Steinert goalie Danielle Fabian and Nottingham goalie Amanda Muziani made six saves.

The loss left the Northstars looking toward Thursday’s Mercer County Tournament play-in game with Hamilton. The two teams played to a scoreless tie earlier this year.

“I think we have to finish,” Lopez said. “We push, we’re pretty good getting from the defenders to midfield and to the forwards, we just have to be more aggressive and finish the goals.

“But we’re such a better team from last year. Our record doesn’t say we are, but we definitely are. We’ve lost a lot of tough ones.”

As for the Spartans, they head to powerful West Windsor-Plainsboro North for a first-round MCT game Saturday. Setzer feels her team has progressed as much as possible.

“I think all the girls played the best that they can and as a coach you can’t ask for anything more than that,” she said. “There’s still some things we (coaches) have to fix and some things they have to fix as well.”

One girl that doesn’t need fixing is sweeper Jackie Coleman, who has been a defensive standout on varsity for three seasons. She certainly deserved a victory on Senior Day.

“She has just embraced the game and become a student of the game,” Setzer said. “It’s a lot of confidence back there and the girls feel a lot of confidence, which is a good thing. Sometimes it’s not because they’ll say ‘Jackie has the ball’ and they won’t hustle back to where they’re supposed to be and they’ll watch her play.

“But she’s gonna be an asset to whatever college she goes to. I hope it’s local because I’d love to go see her play. In fact I’ll take everyone to see her play.”

But for now, they’ll still enjoy playing with her during the most important time of year.

Let the tournaments begin.

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Hamilton dropped a 6-0 decision to Notre Dame, and will enter its MCT match with Nottingham still seeking its first win.