

## Oct. 22 Boys & Girls MCT Soccer: Two winners, two losers



Steinert's always hustling Chris Harvell dribbles ahead of a HoVal defender during today's MCT game in Pennington (Photo by Mike Dill/purchase photos at [www.michaeldillphotography.com](http://www.michaeldillphotography.com)).

### Steinert weathers early storm and late flurry to get past Hightstown

By Rich Fisher

Fish4Scores.com

**Oct. 22:** For the first part of the first half, Steinert's girls' soccer team had trouble getting much pressure on the Hightstown goal, but the defense and goalie Briyanna Femia kept the Spartans net clean during that time.

And then, as so often happens in soccer, the team that wasn't doing much offensively, made the most of its first opportunity.

Lindsay Usarzewicz skied high to head in Darah Wagner's corner kick, which provided the spark for 10th-seeded Steinert's 2-1 win over seventh-seeded Hightstown in a Mercer County Tournament first-round game today.

The Spartans advance to Monday's quarterfinals at second-seeded West Windsor-Plainsboro North, which beat Nottingham 2-0.

"That first goal helped us tremendously," Steinert coach Aimee Turnbull said. "We just have to start settling down earlier. We have some things we want to work on for our game Monday and we'll work them out at practice."

After taking the lead, Steinert took the play as well and began to control the ball and get some shots. Less than five minutes into the second half the Spartans struck again when Rachel Rivera

placed a perfect free kick to Adrianna Boucher, who slipped one into the short side to make it 2-0.

"I saw her open," Rivera said. "A lot of the time I listen to what Turnbull and (assistant Lauren) Bencivengo say where to put the ball, and it was actually right where they told me to put it.

"I was hoping one of the girls would get something off it. Adrianna was right there and put the ball perfectly in the net."

So, it pays to listen to the coaches?

"Yeah," Rivera said with a laugh. "It works good."

Nursing that always-dangerous two goal lead, Steinert had to hold on for another 35 minutes and things got tense when Hightstown scored off a corner kick with 17:19 remaining.

"You have to play a lot differently when it's 2-0," Rivera said. "I've always had the mindset it's the worst lead in soccer. When they got that goal back we started scrambling at first.

"It was a matter of keeping our composure and keeping our heads in the game, and we did it."

They did indeed, as Femia finished with seven saves as Hightstown (9-5-2) had an 11-6 shot advantage.

"Hightstown's fast, they have some players who are good players," Turnbull said. "We saw them before (in a 2-1 loss) and didn't get the result we wanted but they outplayed us the first time. I's nice to come back and get this win. We addressed some things for preparation for today's game

"We started to do some good things and get some opportunities in the first half. We'll work on some things and hopefully we'll see a change on Monday."

One thing that the coaches want to see are better clearing passes from within the box. But when things got hectic down the end, several of the backs did a nice job of at least keeping the ball away from the goal, if not getting them totally out of the zone.

Rivera was one of those, as she is playing sweeper in place of the injured Mollie Coyne.

"Rachel has played sweeper for her other teams, it's a comfort level for her," Turnbull said. "It's really nothing new. We're asking her to do little things differently sometimes, but I think she's doing well, she's very vocal, she takes charge."

And Steinert is taking strides now that the post season has arrived, as the Spartans are 3-0-1 in their last four and 5-1-3 in the last nine. The only loss during that streak was a 1-0 setback to WW-P North on Oct. 6.

"I hope we're peaking," Turnbull said. "We put some pressure on their defense, we had some opportunities. We're doing things now we weren't doing at the beginning of the year so that's good."

## **Northstar boys snap losing streak with authority in win over Ravens**

The sixth-seeded Nottingham boys entered today's home game against 11<sup>th</sup> Robbinsville on a three-game losing streak, but the Northstars used a little deStasio Power to get things turned around.

Fulvio deStasio tallied two goals while big brother Luca assisted on both and scored one of his own as Nottingham took a 3-0 victory in today's first-round game.

Nottingham advances to a game at third-seeded Pennington Monday

"We played a very good game," Northstars coach Mike Braender said.

Fulvio started the scoring with a goal in the final 10 minutes of the first half.

After intermission, Uzo Iloka got fouled in the box to draw a penalty kick. Luca deStasio took the PK and after the shot was saved but Luca followed up the rebound to score.

The final goal came when Luca beat a defender and crossed to Fulvio, who one-touched it home for the final score. Mike Conte made six saves in goal for Nottingham to record his first career shutout.

## **Spartan boys can't withstand surging Hopewell Valley**

Fifth-seeded Hopewell Valley scored two goals each in the first half and the second to take a 4-1 victory over 12<sup>th</sup>-seeded Steinert in a first-round MCT game.

John Powers had Steinert's goal with an assist from Connor Moffat, while Devon Downs made

eight saves. The red-hot Bulldogs improved to 13-3-1 while the Spartans fell to 4-8-2.

The game was closer than the final scored appeared, as it was a one-goal contest until the Bulldogs scored two late goals to break it open. Steinert is winless in its last six games (0-5-1) entering the consolation round of the counties.

### **Ibanez plagues Nottingham girls for second time this season**

Second-seeded West Windsor-Plainsboro North improved to 12-1-1 by taking a 2-0 first-round win over 15<sup>th</sup>-seeded Nottingham.

It was a rematch from opening day, when Jenn Ibanez scored three goals in a six-minute span in the Northern Knights 3-0 win. Ibanez was at it again today, scoring one goal and setting up another against the spunky Northstars.

Chelsea Toscano made six saves in goal for Nottingham, which meets Hightstown in a consolation game.

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Hamilton's girls dropped a 3-0 decision to Princeton in a first-round game Thursday and meets Lawrence in a consolation game.