

## Oct. 24 MCT Soccer Quarterfinals



*Lindsay Usarzewicz's shot beats everybody but the crossbar during Steinert's heart-breaking 1-0 quarterfinal loss to WWPN today (Photos by Mike Dill/purchase photos at [www.michaeldillphotography.com](http://www.michaeldillphotography.com)).*

## Nottingham excels in defeat but still anguishes in elimination

By Rich Fisher  
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Oct. 24: The Nottingham High boys' soccer team had every reason to be proud tonight.

Unfortunately, in the Mercer County Tournament, heartbreak trumps pride.

The sixth-seeded Northstars gave third-seeded Pennington all it could handle before falling in a shootout in the MCT quarterfinals on the Red Raiders' turf field.

Nottingham (9-6) played its heart out, but let two one-goal leads slip away and was victimized by sophomore goalie Jimmy Coyle, who did not play all game but came off the bench to make two diving saves in the shootout.

Nottingham fell 4-2 in the shootout as the Red Raiders (12-2-1) cashed in on all four of its shots.

"Mike (Conte) did everything he could for us in the shootout," coach Mike Braender said of his goalie. "You're supposed to score. That kid (Coyle) wasn't in all game and he comes in and makes two unbelievable saves, that's impressive in itself. That was a little amazing to me."

Pennington coach Chad Bridges said he just "had a feeling about Coyle" in the shootout.

After Pennington's Ethan Decker – who tied the game in the 13<sup>th</sup> minute of the second half with a pretty goal – converted the first PK to make it 1-0, Obinna Iloka countered for Nottingham. Patrik Devlin then went lower right. Fulvio deStasio tried to do the same but Coyle dove to make the save.

Joe Alesio went lower right again to give Pennington a 3-1 lead, and Coyle then foiled Luca DeStasio by diving to his right this time to make another sensational save. Michael Bergen tallied for Pennington to clinch it.

The night started well for the Northstars, as Obinna Iloka was sprung by Luca deStasio and converted to make it 1-0. Pennington tied it when Bergen banged one from just inside the right sideline that amazingly sailed into the net.

The Northstars regained the lead again when Sebastian "Sea Bass" Gallego fed Luca deStasio, who put a nifty move on the goalie and tapped it in with 5:26 left in the half.

After intermission, Pennington made a change that paid off, as Decker slipped one into the short side off a nice feed from Devlin.

"They switched Decker up to the front and that kid can play," Braender said. "We made an adjustment as well, he got loose on one and he doesn't waste his opportunities."

From there, the Red Raiders dominated the possession, keeping the ball in Nottingham's zone but not getting any great scoring threats until the second OT, when Drew Hollinger blasted a shot from in front that went over the net on what looked as if it would be the game.

Pennington had nine corner kicks, but only two could be considered dangerous.

"That's something we worked on the other day," Braender said. "Eleven out of our 18 goals we gave up were on free kicks, we worked on that the other day and I'm happy with the way the guys marked up and kept the ball out of the net."

There was a lot to be happy about, except for the fact the Northstars couldn't prevent the Raiders from grinding away.

"You're up by one, they score and it's a change of momentum," Braender said. "We did come back and get a goal after they got the first one, but they kept it up. They came back and scored again. Give them credit."

Bridges had no problem giving the 'Stars credit.

"Nottingham's a heck of a team," Bridges said. "I had a chance to go watch them play against Robbinsville, Luca's one of the best players around. They're well coached, they're a great team. It's no shame going into OT with those guys."

The result, however, was a shame for the Northstars, who deserved a better fate.

## **An all-too familiar result for Steinert girls against WWP North**

In its last 10 games, Steinert's girls soccer team has exactly two losses, and have given up a total of exactly two goals in those losses.

Both were by West Windsor-Plainsboro North players, as the second-seeded Northern Knights did it to the 10<sup>th</sup>-seeded Spartans again today by taking a 1-0 victory in the Mercer County Tournament quarterfinals in Plainsboro.

WWPN also took a 1-0 win over Steinert on Oct. 6. Unlike their first-round game against Hightstown, when the Spartans reversed the score of their 2-1 regular-season loss, this time the game remained the same.

Like the Nottingham boys, Steinert also had a chance to spring the upset, but fortune did not smile on the Spartans.

The Knights tallied a flukey goal two minutes into the second half and Steinert could not get the equalizer. Briyanna Femia had six saves for Steinert, which managed just two official shots on goal. But the most heart-wrenching shot was one where the keeper was not credited with a save, as Lindsay Usarzewicz sent one off the crossbar that could have been the equalizer.

The Spartans fell to 8-5-3 while WWPN moved to 13-1-1.

## **Second-seeded Trenton Catholic boys ousted by Hightstown**

Charles Wheaton scored a first-half goal but it wasn't enough as sixth-seeded Hightstown tallied in the second overtime to take a 2-1 win over second-seeded Trenton Catholic Academy in the MCT quarters at TCA. Goalie Simeon Donzon had eight saves.

Hightstown moved to 12-4-1 while the Iron Mikes slipped to 17-2.