

Jan. 27 Ice Hockey



*Tanner Dow's goal got Steinert's comeback started in today's win over Hightstown (Photo by John Blaine/purchase photos by e-mailing [jbsportsphoto@aol.com](mailto:jbsportsphoto@aol.com)).*

## **Rossi's 'talk' helps Steinert rally for victory and Patriot Division title**

**By Tony Piscotta, Fish4Scores.com**

**Jan. 27:** If Peter Rossi III is as persuasive in a courtroom as he is behind a hockey bench he

will have one heck of a legal career.

Rossi, an assistant coach for the Steinert hockey team, did not arrive at today's early afternoon game against Hightstown until after the first period due to work commitments. But after watching the Spartans give up back-to-back goals and fall behind 3-1 to the upstart Rams early in the second period, head coach Ryan DeClerico called a time out and it was showtime for Rossi.

"(The 3-1 deficit) was all attributed to us not really skating. We were standing around and not moving our feet. The puck would go in the corner and we'd watch Hightstown go get it." said DeClerico following the Spartans' 7-5 win, which clinched the CVC's Patriot Division title. "Coach Rossi addressed that (during the timeout). He let them have it."

Following the timeout, the Spartans picked things up and though they didn't score on a power play opportunity shortly thereafter, they scored a pair of goals less than a minute apart to tie things up in the middle of the period.

"He (Rossi) can be a jokester but everyone listens to what he says. He's a great coach," said Spartans senior Sean Clinedinst, who was all over the ice for Steinert and finished with a goal and two assists. "He told us what we needed to do and lit a fire under us."

Sophomore Tanner Dow got the comeback started, beating Rams' goalie Jon Sheridan with a quick wrist shot from the left circle with 9:23 left in the second period. Forty-nine seconds later freshman Christian Clayton got the equalizer; stuffing the puck in from in front after Clinedinst skated behind the Rams' net and then fed a pass out front.

While Hightstown would re-take the lead later in the second period and tie things up with a third-period goal, it was Rossi's wake-up call which seemed to get the Spartans started.

"They definitely came out hard," said Clinedinst of the Rams, which feature a lineup comprised largely of underclassmen. "We beat them 5-2 early in the year and they came out for revenge. They were working hard and winning a lot of the 1-on-1 battles."

Hightstown's trio of sophomores -- Mike Genello, Grayson Petti and Brandon Badillo -- were especially troublesome.

Genello, despite being one of the smaller skaters on the ice, was involved in all five Rams' goals - scoring a hat trick and assisting on goals by Petti and Badillo. Petti finished with a goal and three assists.

In fact, while the Steinert lineup has some highly-skilled players, it was the Rams that for much of the game played a better team game and out-hustled Steinert.

"That was one of the things we talked about after the game. They (Hightstown) should have won," said DeClerico. "That's how much they wanted the game. We got lucky with this one."

The Spartans (6-10-1, 5-7-1 CVC) took the early lead when junior Alex Verdi took a shot from the slot that slipped through Sheridan's pads. Clinedinst and defenseman Peter Pitman had assists on the play.

Hightstown tied things up with 6:23 remaining in the first after Genello hit Petti with a long pass from his own zone and Petti rifled a shot past Steinert goalie P.J. Alexiadis.

Steinert took it's first lead late in the second - scoring two goals in the final 32 seconds of the period.

Sheridan made a big stop on a shot by Dow but sophomore Joe Konrath, the Spartans leading scorer, was there to pounce on the rebound and sent the puck into the vacant net. Clinedinst then lasered a shot from the left face-off circle past Sheridan off a feed from Clayton in the corner.

Senior defenseman Andrew Dudich started to be more active in the attack and after being

stopped by Sheridan two times earlier in the third period, he was finally able to find the back of the net.

With the score tied at four, Dudich sent a seeing-eye shot from the point through a maze of players and it somehow found the back of the net with 3:54 left in the game for what would be the game-winning goal.

Konrath converted an empty net goal as the clock expired for the final Steinert goal.

"We played a lot of close games that we could have won this year but didn't, like Hopewell Valley and Robbinsville," said Clinedinst when asked about his impressions of his senior year.

While the expectations were a bit higher after the team got off to a 4-0 start, the Patriot Division title was still something that they could one day look back on with some pride.

"It's better to be the champion of the Patriot Division than not being the champion," said Clinedinst.