

## Brian Smith ready for new challenges as Hamilton West vice-principal

By Rich Fisher

Fish4Scores.com

**July 29:** Brian Smith is changing his Thanksgiving Day allegiance once again.

On Wednesday night, Smith was appointed by the Hamilton Township School Board to be a vice-principal at Hamilton West, meaning he will have to step down as Steinert Athletic Director after one year.

A search is underway for Smith's replacement with several familiar names surfacing as candidates. But nothing is official as the process is just getting started.

Smith took over for Rich Giallella last summer and it was a seamless transition as Spartan athletics went on as usual this past year.

But Smith has long-term goals and this was a good way to get started.

"I loved being AD, it was a great experience because ultimately I want to be a principal, especially in high school," Smith said. "And if you know athletics it's a huge component of your high school career and how you progress.

"(Former West/Steinert principals) Dave McWilliam, Mike Gilbert came up through the ranks and started as athletic directors."

Smith, who ran one of the highest-profile athletic departments in Central Jersey and beyond, said his year as AD was enjoyable and educational.

"You dealt a lot with the public, dealt with a lot of parents, and dealt with a lot of issues," Smith said. "You're the principal in that aspect of the school and it's a unique situation to be in.

"Basically I felt like being in a leadership position like that helped me in the future. And it was nice because I got to deal with a lot of great coaches. A lot of these guys were my friends. They're still my friends but it's kind of an adjustment from just being a friend to having to make some decisions that would affect them. But it was a great year."

Smith is returning to the halls he once roamed as a youth. He was on the Hornets swim team before graduating in 1990. After earning bachelor and Masters Degrees at The College of New Jersey, he taught science at Steinert for 11 years (and coached swimming for nine) and was principal for the Hamilton Township Alternative High School before taking over as AD.

He is excited to return to West, which also has a new principal in Katherine Taylor.

"It's kind of cool to be going back," he said. "I went there yesterday for the first time in over 20 years so it was neat walking through the halls. And my best friend growing up, Chuck Zalescik, is also a vice-principal there so it's great to be back with him."

And so, after rooting for the Orange & Black for the first 28 years of his life before changing allegiance to the Green & White, Smith will be back on the Hornets side of the field during the Thanksgiving Day game.

But he will be at more games than just that.

"I'm still going to be around," said Smith, whose wife Jen is the Spartans boys swim coach. "Athletics is still going to be a huge part of me. I think its important for administrators to be out at the games and show the athletes and the parents you care about that."

And while he had no complaints about his one year as AD, he does have one regret.

"I really hoped," he said, "that I could get Jim Giglio to change that hair style."

Fear not Smitty.

Better men (and women) then you have tried and failed.