

## Dec. 12 Ice Hockey



*Captain Andrew Dudich was a rock on defense during Steinert's impressive win over WW-P South tonight (Photo by Dennis Symons Jr./purchase photos at [www.dennissymons.com](http://www.dennissymons.com)).*

### **Steinert's strong start continues despite loss of Zujkowski to injury**

**By Tony Piscotta  
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At the rate the Steinert High ice hockey team is going, head coach Ryan DeClerico may be forced to start writing up some new goals soon.

Despite playing without impressive sophomore forward Ryan Zujkowski, who suffered a broken collarbone in a travel game over the weekend, the Spartans checked off another one of their first-year coach's pre-season goals, raising their record to 4-0 by defeating the West Windsor-Plainsboro-Pirates, 5-2, at Mercer County Park.

"Our goals coming in were to beat the teams in our division (Lawrence, Hightstown, Nottingham)," said DeClerico, whose squad defeated each of their Patriot Division rivals in their first

three games.

"After that we want to do well against the better teams, starting with West Windsor (South) tonight and then Robbinsville (Wednesday). But we're going to try and get better one game at a time. I was happy tonight because we played some tough, hard hockey."

That tough, hard hockey included a heavy duty work load from senior defenseman Andrew Dudich and some highlight reel playmaking from Zujkowski's regular line mates - sophomores Joe Konrath and Tanner Dow.

"We rely heavily on Andrew, he's on the ice a lot for us," said DeClerico. He plays an unbelievable amount of minutes. We don't keep a time on ice stat but we ask him to do a lot and (he plays) with such heart."

While Dudich was handling things from the back end and generating scoring chances on transition plays (and also scored the Spartans' controversial third goal), Konrath created several chances with his skating, stick handling and passing.

"We both (he and Dow) play at the same level of travel and we played together last year," said Konrath, of his chemistry with Dow. "With Tanner you know where he's going to be and it's easy to make plays.

Dow opened the scoring at the 7:27 mark, tucking in the rebound of a Konrath shot from the slot. The Pirates' Mike Morabito evened things up 53 seconds later with a sharp wrist shot from the point through a maze of players.

With the score tied at one, the fortunes of both teams turned with just under four minutes remaining in the first when WW-PS's top scorer Chris Clancey hit Steinert's Sean Clinedinst near the boards in the offensive zone.

Referee Craig Ross felt the hit warranted a major penalty and game misconduct and Steinert took full advantage - scoring twice on the five-minute man advantage - while the Pirates' attack struggled to generate offense without Clancey.

"(Clinedinst) had his back to the play and his face to the boards and (Clancey) hit him right between the numbers," said DeClerico when asked for his take on the play. "Anytime you have a hit like that at the boards it's at the discretion of the referees and they take that pretty seriously. Especially now with all of the head injuries. "

The Spartans first goal came 1:42 into the man advantage. After Pirates goalie Jon Plester stopped Dudich twice from the perimeter the Spartans broke through with 2:11 remaining in the first period. Konrath got the puck down deep to Dow, who banked the puck off the skates of Plester and into the back of the net to give Steinert a 2-1 lead.

Steinert caught a break on its third goal, when a floater from the point by defenseman Andrew Dudich was struck by Konrath's stick in mid-air before going into the net. After a brief conference the referees allowed the goal to stand, not realizing the puck had been played with a high stick.

With 1:21 remaining in the second Dudich found Konrath in the slot and the sophomore unleashed a wrist shot before Plester could react. That gave him nine goals in the last three games.

"He's a very solid goalie and you're not going to beat him with a single shot," said Konrath. "You either have to have a screen or a quick pass. If you try and take a straight shot it's not going to work."

Clinedinst, while not as flashy as Konrath, used his speed to both cause havoc on the forecheck and create offense. The senior finished the scoring for the Spartans in the third period, stealing the puck and going in on a breakaway; sliding the puck through Plester's pads for the final Spartan goal.

West Windsor-Plainsboro closed out the scoring with 5:33 left when freshman Brian Tso finished a pretty passing play set up by Chris Colacello and John Matthews.

For Steinert, the next challenge is Robbinsville on Wednesday. Like Steinert, the Ravens had an impressive win, defeating Lawrence, 7-1.

"We have to approach that the same way," explained Konrath. " We have to play like it's the biggest game yet and bring everything we have."

If the first four games are any indication, DeClerico may have to bring along a new list of goals as well.