

Nov. 8 CJ IV Boys Soccer



With Aaron Muse (22) behind him and goalie Ryan Sanders on the ground, Pat Remboski watches his shot go over the goal line during the second half of Steinert's 2-0 win over Rancocas Valley today. Steinert's Joe Paragone waits on the doorstep just in case (Photo by Mike Dill/purchase photos at www.michaeldillphotography.com).

As ball keeps bouncing its way, Steinert nears first CJ crown since 1988

By Rich Fisher
Fish4Scores.com

Nov. 8: If Steinert boys soccer coach Todd Jacobs was looking for a positive sign, he got it with 7:12 left in today's Central Jersey Group IV semifinal.

That's when Ryan Lamarca dribbled in from the left sideline and sent what he hoped would be a cross to a teammate in front.

"I was trying to get it across to someone," Lamarca said. "But weird things happen when you kick the ball. I was just trying to cross it and make something happen."

Something happened all right. The ball inadvertently deflected off the leg of Rancocas Valley defender Mark Weller and into the back of the net, which proved to be the only goal necessary in what turned into a 2-0 Spartan home victory

And suddenly, the 14th-seeded mouse that roars is headed to top-seeded East Brunswick (19-0-2) Friday and will try to win its first sectional championship since 1988.

"That goal was all his," said Jacobs, who was a sophomore on that '88 team. "A lot of times we're saying 'Get rid of it! What are you doing all this dribbling for?' That time it paid off."

And it provided a sign.

“You look at that shot,” Jacobs said. “It bounces off the other kid and goes in. That’s when you have to start saying ‘Hey, this is a good thing going on here.’ The ball is starting to go our way finally.”

It sure is.

Steinert (8-8-2), which is at .500 for the first time since Oct. 4, has won four straight after winning just four of its first 14 games.

A trip to the sectional finals for the first time since 2001 (when Piscataway beat the Eric Hastings-led Spartans) seemed quite unlikely when Steinert began this run.

But today might have been their best performance of the season as the Spartans outshot 15th-seeded RV (5-14-2) by 17-5, including 12-1 in the first half. Steinert is truly peaking at the right time.

“We realized we were actually lucky to get in the state playoffs,”

Lamarca said. “We have 16 seniors, so since we’ve gotten in, we know it could be our last game and we just play to win. That’s all we’re doing.”

“Everybody’s plugging,” said defender Pat Remboski, who scored the team’s second goal early in the second half. “We’re all clicking, it’s all working.”

The way today’s game started, it looked like Steinert might have nothing to show for its domination, which is how so many soccer games seem to go. A fluke counter by RV and the Spartans would have been behind despite their strong play.

“I was looking at the clock thinking this could be one of those games,” Jacobs said. “We were pounding. They’re a team that likes to pack it in and you start thinking to yourself ‘Is this the way it’s gonna go?’ We’re getting opportunities in the box, Connor (Moffat) is getting knocked down, we’re



Steinert's Xavier Ceballos beats Rancocas Valley's Ian Carmella to a headball during today's game, while Derek Shearer looks on from behind (Photo by Mike Dill/purchase photos at www.michaeldillphotography.com).

getting shots off and it's not going well.

“But we didn't get impatient. That's what you gotta do against a team like that. Keep knocking the ball around. You'll get opportunity after opportunity and when things are going like they are for us, you can be nothing but positive that things will turn, and eventually they did.”

Steinert gave itself some insurance 7:23 into the second half when Alex Seunath sent a ball into the box that deflected off the goalie to Remboski, who controlled it and slammed it home.

“We were fortunate enough to come out with a goal in the first half,” Jacobs said. “That second goal has proven to be a big time goal for us. It relaxes us, we can knock the ball around.”

The Spartans defense and midfield took it from there. RV got a few more opportunities than the first half but never had a serious scoring threat until it was awarded a penalty kick with 1:04 remaining. The shot went off the crossbar and the celebration began soon after, concluding with Jacobs receiving a water cooler shower.

He loved every minute of it.

“To be in this position is a great feeling,” the ninth-year coach said. “This is my first time going to the CJ finals. We've made it to this point several times and just fell short in a shootout here or there.

“We've finally made it to this point and it's unbelievable how this season has turned around. We're gonna be playing for a Central Jersey title. We had a home game today, these guys could have been satisfied with that, or gotten real nervous, but we played great today, absolutely fabulous. We knocked the ball around real well and got some opportunities.”

And suddenly, they have an opportunity to become a champion. Keep looking for those signs, folks.



Steinert coach Todd Jacobs gets a water cooler bath from midfielder Derek Shearer after 14th-seeded Steinert became one of just two teams left in Central Jersey Group IV today (Photo by Mike Dill/purchase photos at www.michaeldillphotography.com).

