

Oct. 17 JoJo's/Fish4Scores.com Athlete of the Week

In an atypical week, a typical Riese performance guides Steinert to win

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Oct. 17: Sometimes it's about more than statistics.

Adam Riese has had better statistical games than his numbers against Trenton on Saturday.

The senior quarterback still had a nice game, going 6-for-11 for 137 yards and two touchdowns and rushing for 68 yards and another TD in Steinert's 37-14 win over Trenton. He actually was responsible for roughly 75 percent of the Spartans total offense in their fourth straight victory.

But what makes Riese the *JoJo's Tavern/Fish4Scores.com Athlete of the Week* for the week ending on Oct. 15, is that he came through when he really had to. He showed the savvy of a four-year starter when his team needed him.

Whether they wanted to admit it or not, the Spartans were a big story in their first game coming off a bye. Coaches and players around Mercer County most likely wanted to see how Steinert would react to two weeks worth of controversy and adverse publicity in the papers.

In coming up against an improved Tornado team that wanted to make a mark, would the Spartans splinter and implode, or would they, as coach Dan Caruso noted, bond even more?

It took less than six minutes to answer that question, with Riese imposing his will.

In Steinert's first series, he was 2-for-2 for 58 yards, including a 48-yard touchdown pass to Jordan Dunn. In the second series, he scored on a 29-yard run to make it 14-0, and the Spartans were on their way.

No fallout. No more questions.

Just another Steinert win as the Spartans moved to 4-1.

"Adam's a captain," Caruso said. "He was named captain back in January but was really a captain the last couple of years. He keeps the team focused, keeps them moving forward. . . and the on-field stuff is obviously good too."

Riese, who spoke in court on behalf of his teammates along with Dean Lucchesi, said he had help in keeping everyone focused on football during the tumultuous break.

"All our captains, our seniors, everybody was keeping everybody in line and telling them not to worry about all that other stuff," Riese said. "That kind of brought us together, made us closer, kind of made us more of a team."

And teams obviously look to their quarterback to lead, which Riese did flawlessly to set a positive tone for the game.

"We knew coming in here if we got the ball first, we had to go down the field and score quick," Riese said. "That's what we did and it helped us."

"I was ready to come out and play. And things kind of just worked for us."

Riese really knew they were working when he threw his first interception of the year, only to have Steinert respond by turning it into a safety and a touchdown to make the score 23-0.

"When things go right like that you just gotta look up, say thanks and keep playing football," Riese said. "I can't say anything more, the whole team played well, that always helps."

It wasn't the best conditions for passing, as strong winds took the ball places it wasn't supposed to go. But Steinert combated that with short passes to explosive skill players.

“We knew they would bring pressure a lot and we just tried to dink and dunk,” Riese said. “That’s partially our game; to go up top, But we felt today if we put things in the flat our offensive skill guys will definitely make plays, and they did. They really helped me out.”

As the season heads into the home stretch, Riese has continued to show his value in ways other than just athletic talent.

“He’s a bright kid, he has over a 4.0 GPA in school, so he’s an excellent student,” Caruso said. “Not only that, but he’s the type of kid that’s gonna grow up to be a football coach, I can see it. He knows the game of football, he studies the game of football and he really loves it, there’s a lot to be said about that.

“We have a lot of guys on the team that are good football players but aren’t students of the game. He’s a student of the game. Every situation he encounters he learns from it, and he doesn’t make the same mistake twice.”

Riese feels that has been his biggest improvement since inheriting his job as a freshman.

“I feel my mindset is just being in the game, thinking football a lot better,” he said. “I’m trying to read the defense well, make better passes. I’ll make mistakes every now and then, but I always try for perfection and I never accept anything less than that.”

Even at less than perfect, he’s pretty darn good.