

Oct. 22 Football: Spartans have Homecoming party



Getting some touches for the second straight week, Jarius Prather takes off for a nice gain in the second half of today's Steinert win (Photo by John Blaine/purchase photos by e-mailing jbsportsphoto@aol.com).

It all goes right from the start as Steinert demolishes WW-P North

By Rich Fisher

Fish4Scores.com

Oct. 22: Steinert's football team knew exactly what it had to do on Homecoming Day.

Protect the home by going on the attack.

"We had to come out and shut the door right away, before they could even get started," said running back Jeff Mattonelli after the Spartans 49-3 destruction of West Windsor-Plainsboro North today. "That's the best way to do it, you come out and score 21 points before they get any points, it makes it easier for everyone.

"It makes it easier for us and for the defense. They have a margin for error. It's a great way to play the game."

And it was one heck of a fun game for the Spartans (5-1), who made sure to avoid a letdown against the 0-7 Northern Knights by jumping to that big lead quickly. There was no looking past WWPN to Friday's big game with Notre Dame as Mattonelli scored on touchdown runs of 23 and 39 yards on the Spartans first two possessions.

It set the stage for the senior running back's career day, as he finished with 166 yards and three touchdowns on just five carries.

“Jeff is very shifty,” coach Dan Caruso said. “In our offense we spread it around so much that we’ll never have a guy that rushes for 400 yards, but when someone’s got the hot hand you keep feeding him.”

Hot *hand*? Mattonelli was full-body hot, like the Human Torch in the Fantastic Four. His *shortest* run of the day was 23 yards.

But he wasn’t the only one stoking the furnace, as Steinert scored on six of its seven first-half possessions before the reserves played the entire second half with a running clock. By that time, the Spartans had a fairly safe 46-point lead.

Adam Riese was 6-for-12 for 88 yards, including touchdown passes of 33 yards to Jordan Dunn and 20 yards to Vanel Dossous. Tyler Zandomenego rushed four times for 39 yards and a TD and Jarius Prather got some touches for a second straight week and collected 39 yards on eight carries.

Amazingly, Steinert rushed for 240 yards and Riese didn’t have one of them.

“We wanted to establish the running game,” Mattonelli said. “Usually it’s Adam, so it was nice to have the backs have a good game today.”

And for good measure, Keon White made WWPB pay for its only score. After the Knights kicked a field goal, he returned the kickoff 94 yards for a touchdown.

Finally, place kicker Barri Deptula amassed her own personal touchdown by going 7-for-7 on extra points, and has now made 12 straight.

It was Steinert’s way of paying back West Windsor for a 38-14 loss last year, which included a fake punt when the Knights were up by 21 late in the game.

“We came in and we really wanted to win by a lot, because of last year when they won by a lot,” said sophomore middle linebacker Ryan Malagrino. “We played like the better team and then we didn’t rub it in their face in the second half.”

Malagrino has made steady progress this season after taking over a key position at a young age.

“He’s getting better every game, that’s just experience,” Caruso said. “He’s being coached, he’s listening to coaching. Coming up we knew he was very talented.

“He’s very raw. He’s a good football player and he’s aggressive, fast, strong and now he’s learning to be a linebacker, which is a big thing. He’s learning to make his reads instead of just being all instinctual.”

Malagrino says he’s just plugging away.

“I’m just trying hard, trying to do my job,” he said. “I’ve gotten better throughout the games. In the beginning it was hard for me to get used to the varsity level but now it’s just kicking in.”

And the defense is kicking butt, as the first string unit has not allowed a touchdown in nine straight quarters now. While Steinert racked up 328 yards of total offense, it allowed a measly 25.

“We are coming together as a defense more and more each time,” said defensive end Ryan Mostrangeli. “There’s no limit, no bar. We just keep on going.

“I think confidence is a big part of it. If you’re down on yourself and your teammates are down on you, then you’re not gonna get the chance to come up and get better. I recognize the confidence as a great aspect to our defense and it really runs through us.”

And it ran over West Windsor.

EXTRA POINTS: With Riese sitting out the second half, he actually donned a pair of

headphones and appeared quite coach-like. "He looked pretty professional," Mattonelli said with a laugh. "Coach (Caruso) said he was gonna be a coach, I guess they're preparing him." . . . As much as it pains us (yeah, right), we must report on Mostrangeli's unique interception return, which looked like a pick-six until he stumbled and fell at the 13-yard line. "I had trouble securing the ball in my hands, I thought I was a little closer to the endzone than I was," he said. "That's just gonna be a real embarrassing one to look at on film." For one guy yes. But there are probably 60 teammates already pushing and shoving to get a front row seat to Monday's film session.