

Hornet baseball coach Costantino becomes Steinert AD Costantino

By Rich Fisher
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Oct. 27: A long, tedious process that took a lot longer than it probably should have, ended on Wednesday night when John Costantino was approved as Steinert's new Athletic Director by the Hamilton Township Board of Education.

Costantino will step down from his teaching job and his position as Hamilton head baseball coach and begin work at Steinert Monday.

"This is what I have always wanted to do," Costantino said after being approved. "It was my goal when I started teaching and coaching. It is the job that I am going to ride into retirement."

Ironically, Costantino becomes the second straight 1990 Hamilton West graduate to take over as AD of Steinert – the Hornets arch rival. "Cos" succeeds former classmate Brian Smith, who had the job for one year before moving to West as a vice-principal last summer.

Since then, things went back and forth and around and around, but it appears the right man has the job as Costantino showed his administrative ability when taking over for West AD Steve Gazdek when Gazdek was out for health reasons.

Costantino is a Hamiltonian through-and-through, having gone to McGalliard Elementary and Grice Middle School, where he played soccer, basketball and baseball. He moved on to soccer, swimming/wrestling and his first love, baseball, at West, while winning two Central Jersey Group III baseball titles under coach Marty Flynn. He also was part of two Mercer American Legion champions under Chuck Giambelluca at Broad Street Park

He played baseball at Mercer County Community College and Trenton State before earning a degree in physical education in 1995 and a Masters degree in 2004.

"I have been preparing for this opportunity ever since," Costantino said.

He became an assistant under Flynn – who he credits as his biggest influence – in 1994 and served under Jim Maher (his possible replacement as baseball coach) from 1996-2001. Costantino's first head coaching job was at Hopewell Valley in 2002 but when a teaching job fell through there, he returned as Maher's assistant from 2003-05.

In 2006 he took the head job, and has also coached boys and girls soccer at the JV and varsity level, along with wrestling, swimming and football.

He now takes over one of the most successful athletic programs in Mercer County, and has already talked to Smith and former AD (and another mentor), Rich Giallella.

"I have gotten advice from both over the past few months as the process has taken place, but I don't know how things are going to work out until I am actually in the job," Costantino said. "I have observed from a distance and have been keeping track of things through the papers and people involved.

"It will be fun thinking of all the things G and Brian Smith have told me will happen and see how true it all is."

One thing that is true, Steinert has gotten a true professional who loves the area and loves athletics. If this isn't his dream job, it's pretty darn close.

Costantino already has long-time friends on the coaching staff, such as Brian Giallella and Todd Jacobs, and possesses an easy-going personality necessary for the rigors of the job and the various personalities he must deal with.

"I hear all the time about administrators who hate their job, because all they ever deal with is

the negative things that go on in school,” Costantino said. “I want to be around kids and individuals who want to promote the positive things that are going on in our schools.”

And with that in mind, John Costantino is off to his new job with a smile on his face.

For an expanded look at John Costantino’s road to the Steinert AD job, check out the upcoming November issue of the Hamiltonian newspaper.