

Rutgers-bound OL Quartucci enjoying his last Hornet hurrah

12TH MAN TOUCHDOWN CLUB

BY KEVIN MALONEY
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

WEST WINDSOR — What a novel idea Frank Quartucci had when he first strapped on the football pads for Hamilton High four years ago.

"Playing high school football, I wanted to play because it was something I liked to do," Quartucci said.

Quartucci never had grandiose thoughts of shaking hands with Joe Paterno on a Friday and Greg Schiano on the ensuing Sunday as he did last year when both Penn State and Rutgers recruited the 6-foot-4, 295-pound lineman.

But four years later, Quartucci has two games remaining on his high school football career and a little over a month left in his high school career before graduating early to enroll at Rutgers on a football scholarship.

"I just did what the coaches told me to do," said Quartucci, who boasts a 3.7 GPA and is leaning towards majoring in education. "Obviously this is a dream come true. I'm blessed to be in this situation."

Quartucci, who helped the Hornets amass 265 rushing yards in a 21-14 loss to Notre Dame Friday night — the most the Irish defense had allowed all season — was honored as the Offensive Lineman of

the Week last night at the 12th Man Touchdown Club dinner at Mercer County Park's Boathouse Marina.

Steinert's Judens Goinbert (Offensive Back of the Week), Princeton Day School's Aiden Epply-Schmidt (Defensive Back of the Week), Lawrence's Ethan Posey (Defensive Lineman of the Week) and Princeton's Brian Vieten (Special Teams Player of the Week) were also honored.

Goinbert rushed for a season-high 158 yards and three touchdowns — one more score than his total output coming into the game — on 20 carries to lead Steinert to a 34-6 thrashing over Klockner Road rival Nottingham Saturday. The win helped the Spartans secure the No. 6 seed in the NJSLA Group III Central playoffs where they will meet Ocean Township — who fittingly share the same Spartan moniker.

"It's going to be a battle of the Spartans," Goinbert said. "I guess this game will tell you who the real Spartans are."

Epply-Schmidt recorded 15 tackles — his second-highest output of the season behind an 18-tackle performance against the George School — three of which went for a loss, and forced a fumble as the Panthers fell to Tower Hill, 12-7.

Much like Quartucci, Epply-Schmidt never envisioned himself

becoming as much of an impact player that he developed into over the course of his high school career.

"When I was a freshman, I was 145 pounds, and really, just insignificant," the senior said. "The most I hoped for was to play well on JV. I just kept working hard, I continued to get better and I guess the coaches realized."

Posey, who promised to make life difficult for opposing quarterbacks this season during training camp, believes that even though his stats aren't where he would like them to be his impact has still been felt by the opposition.

"I only have four sacks, so that's a little disappointing," Posey said. "But if you ask opposing quarterbacks, I think they'll tell you I've spent a lot of time in the backfield."

Vieten was 4-for-4 in extra points, connected on a career-long 38-yard field goal — he had a 40-yard extra point last year — and squibbed two onside kicks that Princeton recovered in a 31-17 win over WW/P South.

Vieten's ideal scenario for Friday night's Group III playoff game against Monroe: "It comes down to the last five seconds and I boot a 45-yard field goal to help us win 24-21."

Contact Kevin Maloney at kevin.maloney33@yahoo.com.



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The 12th Man Touchdown Club honored its players of the week last night. From left to right: Brian Vieten, Princeton, Special Teams; Ethan Posey, Lawrence, Defensive Lineman; Aidan Epply-Schmidt, PDS, Defensive Back; Frank Quartucci, Hamilton, Offensive Lineman; and Judens Goinbert, Steinert, Offensive Back.