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*Q&A from NJP*

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Covering New Jersey High School Ice Hockey

## THE COACHES CORNER

*This edition features*

**STEINERT HIGH SCHOOL**

### HEAD COACH BILL JAMES

**Tell us about yourself? Married? Kids? Interests?**

I am 42 years old and have been married to my wife for 13 years and we have three sons, ages 10, 7 and 3. My interests are coaching my sons sporting events, reading history books and traveling with my family.

**Are you a teacher? Other occupation?**

Yes, I have been teaching history for 20 years. Five years at Notre Dame High School, and the past fifteen at Steinert High School.

**How long have you coached? How long have you coached at Steinert?**

I am entering my 20th season as a hockey coach, five years as an assistant at Notre Dame. The next four years as an assistant at Steinert, and I am entering my 11th season as the head coach at Steinert. I also coached high school football for 20 years as well, but I gave football up two years ago to help coach my sons in youth sports.

**Where did you grow up? Where did you go to school?**

I was born in Philadelphia, but have lived the last 32 years in New Jersey. I graduated from Notre Dame High School in 1984. I graduated from Trenton State College with a degree in History Education, and I have a Masters Degree from Rider University.

**Can you tell us about your playing career including which clubs and teams you played for?**

I played youth ice hockey for the East Windsor PAL League, and also played at Notre Dame High my junior and senior years, which was the first year they had an ice hockey team. I also played football in high school and two years in college.

**Describe your roots in hockey?**

Growing up in Philadelphia I played street hockey, while being an avid Flyers fan. When we moved to New Jersey, I started playing ice hockey at the age of 11.

**What team was the toughest that you faced Last year?**

We played several tough teams including, but not limited to, Notre Dame, Hopewell Valley, Fair Lawn and Brick Memorial to name a few.





**Can you speak about what distinguishes your hockey program from other schools in the state of NJ?**

I cannot speak for other programs, but I know at Steinert we have great parents who are very supportive, an excellent Booster Club, and student athletes who always give 100%.

**Your state playoff win over Fair Lawn was an incredible accomplishment and probably one of the biggest upsets of the decade. Describe your teams feelings on that great night for Steinert hockey.**

The team was extremely happy and there was a great sense of pride and accomplishment, especially since no one gave us a chance. To me it was the epitome of not only team work but believing in each other as teammates.

**You scored 9 goals in that game on a great defensive team that night that averaged giving up only 2 per game. Tell us about your offensive squad led by Decowski, Firth and Redden?**

We were obviously a very strong offensive team and we tried to play to that strength all season long. The line of Decowski, Firth and Redden just game in and game out found ways to score.

**The high scoring line (254 pts) was arguably the best in the state. All three of these players were seniors. How do you even start to replace that firepower as a new season begins?**

You can't replace a line like that, you just coach and hope that remaining players believe that it's their turn to step up.

**Which seniors do you expect to be your key players for next season?**

Tyler Rogers, Tug Giovinazzo, and James Gindhart.

**What are your views on the state playoff split between A and B teams? Should there be one Public champion?**

I think it's a good idea because we were getting to the point where there were too many teams in one bracket, and something needed to be done, so the most natural thing to do was to divide it based on school population like other school groupings in the state.

**Do you feel coaches have a responsibility to be role models for their players?**

Absolutely, I think it is important that coaches are an extension of the classroom.

**High School hockey is extremely competitive. Coaches receive pressure from many sources to develop a win at all cost philosophy. How do you find ways to build character in "all" of your players when this mindset exists?**

It's not easy, but I think you need to make sure your players work hard and do the right things both on and off the ice.

**Steinert achieved its 200th win this year. What lies ahead for this program in the next few years and what are your expectations of success?**

I think over the past five years, we have played some good hockey and built a good reputation and I only see that continuing into the future.



**If there was one thing you could change to improve your program at your school, what would it be?**

Like anyone else more ice time.

**The Mercer County Tournament and The Devils Cup saw two first round defeats to nemesis Hopewell Valley. How do you think the Spartans will match up against the Bulldogs and other CVC foes such as Notre Dame, Princeton and Robbinsville?**

Overall I think the league will be very competitive. With hard work we will be able to compete with all the teams we play.

**In your opinion, when is junior hockey the best alternative to playing for your high school team?**

When a player has an interest in playing in college, and he's accomplished all he can in high school. However, I think that if it's done properly they can do both.

**Do you have a favorite quote or saying that you impart to your players each year?**

Yes, I frequently tell the team "Fear no one, but respect every team we play".

**Do you think your team can get to the NJ frozen four next season?**

It is obviously every teams goal, but it is not an easy accomplishment.

**What advice do you have for parents of NJ High School hockey players as they prepare to have their child enter college?**

Make sure they pick a college that they really want to attend in case hockey does not work out.

**What advice do you have for current players that want to continue their hockey careers after high school?**

Be prepared to go to prep school or play juniors if they want to play at a high level. If not there are many great college club teams where they can still play hockey after high school.

