



From Hazelton to Hawk Hill

By Pete Spiewak '11

At the age of 12, when Rocco Pozzessere decided to quit soccer and focus on playing football, he should have known that he would not be let off the hook very easily.

"That didn't go over too well in our house," said Nick Pozzessere, Rocco's older brother and Saint Joseph's senior midfielder.

For a family that made 90-minute trips to Lancaster, Pa. for club soccer practice three times a week, soccer was a serious matter in the Pozzessere household.

Thanks to his father, Angelo and his brother though, Rocco says, he got back into the sport he loved and belonged in—soccer.

"They put me back on track," said Rocco, who was tempted to try football because most of his friends were playing the sport.

And it is a good thing they did because both brothers have gone on to see great success on the soccer field. Rocco has started all but two games over the course of his first two seasons on Hawk Hill, and helped lead Hazelton Area High School to the District Finals during his sophomore season.

Nick has put together quite a résumé of his own. He has been a mainstay in the Hawks lineup, starting every game in his four-year career at Saint Joseph's. Nick was a senior on that Hazelton Area team.

Sports have been a big part of the Pozzesseres since they were toddlers. For Nick, his best friend and current Hawk goalkeeper, Joe Bodnar, has been there every step of the way.

"Nick and I have known each other since we were born," Bodnar said.



Living down the street from the Pozzesseres, Bodnar was always on the court or field side-by-side



Rocco and Nick Pozzessere have combined to make 63 starts over two seasons on Hawk Hill as a steady force in defense and midfield, respectively.

with the two brothers. Now seniors in college, the two are still teammates.

"Other than club soccer, I've played on every single team of my entire life with Nick," Bodnar said. "From Little League baseball to basketball, we've always been on the same team."

Bodnar was also a part of the district finalist Hazelton Area team. Although Hazelton Area High School never was

known for its soccer, Bodnar and the Pozzessere brothers carried the team to heights that it has not reached since.

"For our high school team to do that, it was a pretty big deal since soccer was never popular in our town," Rocco said.

This year, another player that Rocco is used to playing with has joined the team. Kevin Rhoades, who played on Super Nova FC with Rocco, has been with the Hawks this year after transferring from James Madison.

"It's good having him back around," Rocco said. "I have a couple of classes with him, which is nice."

Although all three of the boys from Tresckow, Pa., independently made the decision to attend Saint Joseph's, having his brother on the team gave the Hawks the inside track to recruiting Rocco.

"I got to know the players from when I would come to see my brother play," Rocco said. "It seemed like the right fit"

As for Nick, he chose the Hawks because he felt he fit the team well, and because of another family member's experience at Saint Joseph's.

"One of the things that impacted my decision was that my uncle graduated from here," Nick said. Although they decided to attend Saint Joseph's for different reasons, they all agree that having one another made things easier.

"It was good to already have a friend when I first got here," Nick said about Bodnar.

Thanks to all of the time they have spent together on and off of the field, the Pozzessere brothers make great teammates.

"We work well together because we know what moves we are each going to make," the older brother said. "We communicate well with each other."

Nobody would have expected three kids from Tresckow, the small, football-oriented town, to have made it this far. But after all that time together, maybe it was just meant to be.

"It would just be weird playing soccer without them," Bodnar said.



Joe Bodnar has been teammates with Nick on every team.

