



## **1976 Hamilton High West Boys State Champions**

**1976 saw the Hamilton High West Boys Soccer team deliver the second state championship in the school's history. With multiple players garnering honors and brandishing a high-scoring offence, the boys from South Clinton Avenue kept up the strong soccer tradition in Mercer County and we are happy to induct them into the Mercer County Soccer Hall of Fame.**

**Outscoring their opponents 71 to 16 over 20 games, Hall of Fame coach Jack Bell, who was a member of the first state title winners for the school in 1962, and assistant coach Mickey Kessler, led a talented group of players through a successful season that saw the Hornets finish with a 17-2-1 record overall. Leading the team were co-captains Rich Alito in midfield and John Carmignani, the team's leading scorer. Alex Herceg, Mike Lee, and Dave Alito also picked up their share of the scoring, while Ward Rooney and Carmen DeMarco gave enormous strength to the offence.**

**Along with Alito at midfield, Nick Wiener, Frank Kane, and Jim Preston formed a strong link between the front line and the rear guard. Defensively, the team was stacked, with the likes of Jim Hudick, Toby Hankins, Scott Bodolosky, Jim Hoey, Mark Meckel and goalkeepers Tony Astore and Andy Butchko, who, together, limited opponents to less than a goal a game over the season.**

Only losing to Ewing and East Brunswick during the regular season, the state tournament had Hamilton meeting the same two teams in the first and second rounds, dispatching them both to avenge the only blemishes on their season's record. Further wins over Neptune and Shawnee took them to the state title game, where, in a match that went to overtime, they took home the title with a win over Hackensack, 3-2 for the school's second state championship.

Honors were multiple for the team. Rich Alito was named All-County, All-State and All-American. Carmignani earned All-County and All-State honors, as did Hudick. Herceg, Lee, and Astore were all named to the All-County team.

In a season that has yet to be duplicated at the school, the 1976 Hamilton High West Boys represented Mercer County soccer at the highest level, and we welcome them into the Mercer County Soccer Hall of Fame, Class of 2025.