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Gridiron Classic Notes: Hall of Fame, 7-on-7 and More

Written by Scott Stump - Managing Editor



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HOLMDEL - At halftime of Monmouth's 28-7 win over Ocean in Thursday night's U.S. Army All-Shore Gridiron Classic, two legendary coaches and an award-winning broadcaster of Shore Conference football were inducted into the Shore Football Coaches Foundation Hall of Fame.

Standing at midfield on the turf at Holmdel High School were Lacey head coach Lou Vircillo, Keyport head coach Mike Ciccotelli and Shore Sports Network broadcaster Kevin Williams. They comprised the fifth class of the SFCF Hall of Fame since it was created in 2008 and first inducted the Shore Conference's all-time wins leader, former Brick coach Warren Wolf.



The 2012 Shore Football Coaches Foundation Hall of Fame inductees (from left to right): Kevin Williams, Lou Vircillo and Mike Ciccotelli. (Photo by Cliff Lavelle).

founders of the Shore Football Coaches Foundation, which runs the U.S. Army All-Shore Gridiron Classic and puts on a yearly Academic All-Shore breakfast for Shore Conference players. He also has three victories as a head coach of the Ocean County squad in the Gridiron Classic, including a 6-3 victory in last year's game that put him second all time in Classic history behind Wolf, who has five.

He was surrounded on the field at Holmdel by a large contingent of family, friends and coaches during his induction.

"It's a great honor, especially coming from your peers," Vircillo said. "To be considered to be among all these coaching greats is very special to me because I believe Shore Conference football is some of the best and most competitive football in the state."

The longest-tenured active coach in the Shore Conference, Ciccotelli has led the Red Raiders to six NJSIAA Central Jersey Group I titles, which is tied for the second-most of any head coach in conference history. He is one of three active Shore Conference coaches with more than 200 career victories and one of only six in conference history.

Since taking over at Keyport in 1978, Ciccotelli has compiled a career record of 220-122-3, leading Keyport to Central Jersey Group I championships in 1987, 1988, 1992, 1998, 1999, and 2002. He also has led the Red Raiders to 12 Shore Conference division titles, including three straight from 1987-89. His teams have made

Vircillo ranks third all-time in Shore Conference history and is the active wins leader with 248 career victories, including 214 as the only coach in the history of the Lacey program, which began in 1981. He is one of three active Shore Conference coaches with more than 200 career wins and is 16 victories away from passing late Manasquan and Middletown North legend Vic Kubu for the second-most wins in Shore history.

During his time at Lacey, Vircillo has led the Lions to four NJSIAA South Jersey Group III championships, including three undefeated seasons, with teams known for smashmouth running attacks and hard-nosed defense. His four state titles rank third among active Shore Conference head coaches behind fellow Hall of Fame inductee Mike Ciccotelli of Keyport (6) and one of Ciccotelli's former players, Middletown South head coach Steve Antonucci (5). Lacey went 11-0 in 1989 to win its second straight state championship, and it finished 12-0 in 2006 and 2010.

Vircillo also has led the Lions to 12 Shore Conference division titles, including six straight Class B South crowns from 1988-1993. He ranks fourth in Shore Conference history among coaches in total titles between division and state championships. His teams have made 20 state playoff appearances, including 17 during his tenure at Lacey. His first head coaching job was at Red Bank, where he led the Bucs to three state playoff appearances and a pair of division titles from 1976-80. In 2008, he was inducted into the New Jersey Football Coaches Association Hall of Fame.

Vircillo has also been an instrumental figure as a trustee and one of the

15 state playoff appearances and he has a career playoff record of 21-10.

With teams known for their punishing Delaware Wing-T running attack and physical defense, Ciccotelli led the Red Raiders to a school single-season record 11 wins in 1999, 2002 and 2003, including an 11-0 season in 2002. Ciccotelli has also twice served as the Monmouth County head coach in the Gridiron Classic, winning both times.

"It means everything," Ciccotelli said. "I think about coaching against all these great coaches here and all my former players, and there's just so much great history in the Shore. This is just an awesome honor."

A long-time supporter of Shore Conference football and an award-winning radio broadcaster, Williams is currently in his 33rd year at WOBN radio and is the director of quality control at WOBN and director of the Shore Sports Network.

Williams is a nine-time winner of the New Jersey Sportscaster of the Year Award given by the National Sportscasters and Sportswriters Association. He is in charge of the award-winning team that broadcasts live Shore Conference football and basketball games on the Shore Sports Network, which is made up of WOBN AM 1160/1310 and 105.7 "The Hawk." As part of that he also co-hosts a Thursday Night High School Football Show in the fall and broadcasts morning sports reports on New Jersey 101.5 and 97.3 ESPN-FM. Those radio broadcasts have become part of the fabric of football season for Shore Conference gridiron fans, players and coaches for three decades.

"The biggest thrill is to be in the company of such great Shore Conference coaches," Williams said.

Lacey Wins 7-on-7 Title

For the second time in the three-year existence of the Shore Conference 7-on-7 Tournament, Lacey took home the title. The Lions beat Howell 36-13 in the event, which was held in the hour before the kickoff of the Gridiron Classic.

The main subplot was that Lacey's offense is being run by Cory Davies, who stepped down as Howell's head coach after 21 seasons and is now an assistant under Vircillo at Lacey. There were conflicts galore, as not only was Davies facing his former team, but his son, Ryan, was a quarterback for the Monmouth County squad in the big game. Meanwhile, his younger son, Conor Davies, is a sophomore quarterback at Lacey who took some snaps in the 7-on-7 as the backup to junior Tom Kelly.

"It was hard," Cory Davies said about coaching against his old team. "It was kind of bittersweet."

Dickey, Sunnerville Win Sam Mills Awards



Lakewood offensive lineman Zach Dickey receives Ocean County's Sam Mills Award while joined by (from left) Monsignor Donovan coach Dan Duddy, Eliterecruits.com/All Shore Media's Chris Melvin and Ocean County head coach Rob Davis of Barnegat. (Photo by Cliff Lavelle).

Freehold defensive lineman Stacey Sunnerville ([click here for story](#)) and Lakewood offensive lineman Zach Dickey were the recipients of this year's Sam Mills Awards for each county. Selected by the coaching staffs from each county, the award is named after the late Sam Mills, a Long Branch legend at linebacker who went on to become an All-Pro with the New Orleans Saints in the 1980s and died of cancer in 2005 when he was an assistant with the Carolina Panthers.

For Dickey, it was an unexpected honor for a player from a program working to remake itself back into a competitive team after a rough run of futility in the late 2000s. The Piners went 3-7 in 2010 and 2-8 in 2011 after finishing a combined 5-65 from 2003-2009, which included a 33-game losing streak.

"I was really surprised because there's a lot of dedicated players on the team and I wouldn't have thought I was up for the award, so I was shocked," Dickey said. "In a school where the team is not recognized very much, it's an honor to be considered an athlete deserving of this award."

Dickey will continue his career at Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, N.C., where he was headed after the game on Thursday night to meet with the coaches before he officially has to report on Aug. 7.

"I'm about to go to the next level now," Dickey said. "I'm about to put in more work and more time to keep my career going."

Gridiron Notes

Getting elected captains for your game among a group of all-stars is a special honor. The Monmouth captains were Howell quarterback Ryan Davies, Red Bank Catholic linebacker Anthony Dorsi, Middletown South offensive lineman Jon Valentine, Ocean safety Greg Moore, and Manalapan running back John Sieczkowski. The captains for Ocean County were Lacey defensive end Jordan Powell, Manchester safety Joe Johnson, Brick linebacker Tom Winters, Toms River South fullback Zack Ligouri and Point Boro quarterback John Dunbar.

Ligouri and Dorsi are both sons of players who played in the inaugural All-Shore Classic in 1978...Manalapan's John Sieczkowski became the rare back to reach 100 yards rushing in the Classic when he ran for 100 and a touchdown on 18 carries. The single-game record is 161 yards set by Joe "The Jet" Henderson of Freehold in 1986...The two touchdown passes by St. John Vianney quarterback Anthony Carlucci were one shy of tying the Classic record of three set by Toms River East's Alex Zarrillo in 1993...SFCF Hall of Famers Warren Wolf, Al Saner, Barry Rizzo and Ron Signorino Sr. were all in attendance on Thursday night...This was the 20th year that Middletown South athletic trainer Stacy White served as a member of the Monmouth County staff at the Classic...George Watson Sr. of the legendary Tuskegee Airmen from World War II was part of the ceremonial coin toss to start the game.

Recruits from two FCS programs made their presence felt. Monmouth University-bound John Sieczkowski of Manalapan ran for 100 yards and a touchdown, Brick linebacker Tom Winters had three sacks and Manchester safety Joe Johnson was a starter and a captain. Sieczkowski and Winters will soon be side-by-side, as Sieczkowski is also headed to Monmouth to play linebacker. University of New Hampshire recruit Jordan Powell of Lacey, a defensive end, was Ocean's defensive MVP with three sacks of his own, and New Hampshire-bound wideout Anthony Pante of St. John Vianney had a 44-yard touchdown catch for Monmouth.

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