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## Lacey's Vircillo Joining Shore Football Hall of Fame

Lions coach called 'a role model' to his players

By [Karen Wall](#) [Email the author](#) July 10, 2012

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Keith Elias remembers the first time he met Lou Vircillo.

"I was in Pop Warner, and he came to see the game," said Elias, reflecting on his relationship with Vircillo, Lacey's only head football coach, who is being inducted into the Shore Football Coaches Foundation Hall of Fame on Thursday evening. "He liked me as a player, and he gave me workout advice."

"There's memory after memory," Elias said by phone late Monday afternoon. "It's hard to pick one memory when you've spent a lifetime with someone."

Vircillo will be honored at halftime of the [All Shore 35th Gridiron Classic](#), which pits recently graduated high school senior football players from Monmouth County against seniors from Ocean County. The game is set for a 7 p.m. kickoff at Holmdel High School.

Elias, who spent six seasons in the NFL with the Giants and the Indianapolis Colts, is easily the most well-known of Vircillo's many players at Lacey. But as the Lions' only coach over the school's 31-year history, Vircillo has seen dozens of players come through the program.

Lacey has had plenty of success along the way, winning four state sectional championships in 17 state playoff appearances and also winning a dozen Shore Conference divisional titles. Vircillo has 248 victories as a head coach.

That wasn't the most important thing he did, however, Elias said.

"His job, in his own mind, is to teach boys how to become men," Elias said. "The winning was a byproduct."

The winning happened because Vircillo created an environment that drew the boys close, Elias said.

"It was a brotherhood, and he's the father of the brotherhood," Elias said. "He is extremely worthy of this honor."

Vircillo is being inducted this year along with Mike Ciccotelli, who coached at Keyport for years, and WOBN sports director Kevin Williams, who has devoted as much time to covering Shore Conference sports as anyone around. They join [a group of names](#) that reads like a who's who of Shore Conference football, including Warren Wolf of Brick; Vic Kubu, the longtime Manasquan coach; Ron Signorino Sr. of Toms River South; the late John Amabile of Neptune and Wall, and several coaches who are responsible for putting the Shore Conference on the map in its early years of existence.

"It's just an honor to be considered, and to be considered worthy enough to receive it," Vircillo said. "There are a lot of fine individuals who are in the Hall

of Fame."

Vircillo, who took his first football coaching job at Red Bank Catholic in 1972, was the head coach at Red Bank Regional before coming to Lacey when the school opened in 1981.

"I thought it was a great challenge to start off a new program," Vircillo said. "The people who hired me had the desire to build a program and a tradition."

And Elias said Vircillo has done just that.

"There's something special about being a Lacey football player," Elias said, and not just because of the program's success, but because of the life lessons Vircillo teaches.

"He was the first person who opened my heart to believe there was something greater in life," Elias said. "He taught me there was a greater purpose to my life than just playing football."

He also taught his players the importance of maintaining a balance between the game and the rest of their lives, because while he worked hard, he didn't obsess about winning to the point of being ill.

"He is a role model," said Elias, who coached with Vircillo for a year, in 1997, between his stints with the Giants and the Colts.

"There have been some great coaches in the Shore Conference, going as far back as the 1920s," Vircillo said. Some of the inductees — Wolf and Signorino are among them — have been inducted while they were actively coaching. There also have been several — including Kubu — inducted.

"I'm just glad I'm on the active side," Vircillo said.

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