

Davies shines in relief of Kelly to lift Lacey to win

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TOMS RIVER — When Lacey senior quarterback Tom Kelly took a hard helmet-to-helmet hit at the end of a 26-yard scramble during the first quarter of a key Shore Conference Class A South matchup at Toms River South on Friday night, it wasn't unthinkable that the trajectory of the Lions' season was going to change.

After the hit, Kelly tried to shake it off, but took three consecutive sacks a few plays later to end the series, as well as his night.

In came shifty junior quarterback Conor Davies, the son of Lions offensive coordinator and former Howell head coach Cory Davies. Based on Conor Davies' effort in relief, if Kelly does have to miss extended time, the Lions will be in good hands.

Davies went 15-for-20 for 206 yards and two touchdowns with all of the damage coming after halftime. Junior running back George Sayer scored twice and the Lions defense that was gashed for 42 points last week against Toms River East yielded just three points after halftime on Friday night in a 32-24 win at Toms River South's Detwiler Stadium.

"Every week in practice, I still play quarterback and get my touches in, plus I played quarterback four games last year," said Davies, who has played mostly as slot receiver this fall. "It's still hard coming in cold, but it's just not as bad because I've done it before."

With Lacey (4-0, 3-0) trailing, 21-13, at halftime, Davies led a 13-play, 60-yard drive to open the second half that featured maybe a little more running than normal from Lacey in an effort to get him comfortable. Davies capped the drive with a 12-yard touchdown pass over the middle to junior wide receiver Ethan Blackwell. The 2-point conversion failed, but Lacey trailed just 21-19.

After forcing Toms River South (2-2, 1-2) to go three-and-out on its first drive of the second half. Davies was faced with a third-and-26 from his own 35. On a play his father has run and succeeded with over the years. he hit Mike Bocchini for eight yards along the right sideline. The junior wideout then flipped the ball behind him to senior wide receiver Christian Tutela, who raced for 34 more yards off the hook-and-lateral.

"That was huge right there, just huge momentum," Davies said. "I can't even really explain how big that was. We practice it all the time, we're very comfortable doing it."

On fourth-and-6 from the 19, a designed sprint out to the right by Davies was met by two Indians defenders. He reversed field, bought plenty of time by doing so and and threw across his body to Sayre over the middle for a 19-yard touchdown pass and the lead for good at 25-21.

That touchdown catch was part of a huge night for Sayre, who caught that touchdown pass, ran for another late to ice the game and also registered an interception of athletic Indians junior quarterback Tymere Berry and a fumble recovery.

"After East scored 42 points on us, to come out against South because they have such a big offense

supposedly and shut them out in the second half is a great thing because we really bounced back,” Sayre said.

Sayre’s interception of Berry came with Toms River South trailing, 25-21, and was followed by Sayre’s rushing touchdown from 14 yards out on the very next play.

Toms River South’s only point of the second half came on Russ Messler’s 36-yard field goal to cap the scoring with less than a minute to play. Lacey recovered the ensuing onside kick and took knees to end the game.