

FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE WEEK: Lacey QB Conor Davies

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Conor Davies does not let much affect him.

"I'm not really the type of person that gets nervous," said Davies, a junior quarterback at Lacey.

If ever there was a situation for Davies to get some jitters, it might have been last Friday night at Toms River South's venerable Detwiler Stadium in front of a standing-room only crowd against Toms River South in a key Shore Conference Class A South game.

Davies, the son of Lacey offensive coordinator and former Howell head coach Cory Davies and the younger brother of former Howell standout quarterback Ryan Davies, had to relieve senior Tom Kelly. Kelly, one of the Shore's best QB's sustained a concussion on a helmet-to-helmet hit after a 26-yard scramble in the first quarter.

"We were already playing the game. It wasn't like it was five minutes before the game and I was just starting," Davies said. "The game was already going. I was already playing. It wasn't like I was coming in cold off the bench.

Davies had been involved in the game as the slot receiver in the Lions' spread offensive alignment. He had caught two passes for 28 yards. He has been playing extensively at slot receiver this season.

He was certainly efficient after his move to quarterback. He went 15-for-20 for 207 yards and threw two TD passes in the second half and also rushed for 25 yards on nine carries as Lacey rallied from an eight-point halftime deficit and recorded a 32-24 win that kept it tied with Brick and Jackson Memorial for first place in Class A South.

"He's not a kid that's bothered by anything," said Cory Davies. "He's very calm, ice-cube type of kid. That's probably his biggest strength. He doesn't get rattled very easily."

It was not like last Friday was Conor Davies' first varsity game as a QB. He started three games for the Lions last season when Kelly broke his collarbone. Lacey won all three.

"He had the pressure last year of the Brick game, where we had to win on the last play of the game and he had to deliver the pass (Lacey won the game on a hook-and-ladder play on the final play)," Cory Davies said.

It also does not hurt that Conor Davies has been around the spread offense since his father instituted it at Howell before the 2005 season. He also watched his brother run it with great success for two seasons. Ryan Davies, who is currently at Montclair State University, was the Asbury Park Press' All-Shore first-team quarterback in 2011.

"I know it like the back of my hand," Conor Davies said.

And that's even though, both Cory Davies and Conor Davies said they don't talk about the offense as

much at home as one would think.

“I’ve always said it about his brother, Ryan, too: We try to keep it the same as every other quarterback and not overdo it at home,” Cory Davies said. “I think he just knows it from being around it, watching it, having his brother talk about it and stuff like that.”

Conor Davies said everything was calm in the huddle of the Lacey offensive unit after he came in for Kelly.

“The team really didn’t panic. They showed good composure,” Conor Davies said.

Davies made some key plays in the second half as the Lions outscored the Indians, 19-3, to wipe out a 21-13 halftime deficit.

The first came on a hook-and-ladder play. On a third-and-26 from the Lacey 35 in the third quarter. Davies threw an 8-yard completion to Mike Bocchini, who then flipped the ball to standout senior wide receiver Christian Tutela. Tutela then raced 34 yards for a 42-yard play.

Then, with Toms River South still ahead, 21-19, in the fourth quarter, Davies, on a sprint out to the right, eluded two Toms River South defenders, threw across his body and completed a 19-yard TD pass to George Sayre that gave Lacey the lead for good. Sayre, primarily a running back, moved into the slot receiver spot when Davies moved to quarterback.

“Conor throws the ball very well on the move,” Cory Davies said. “He’s able to extend plays.”

With Kelly sidelined for Friday night’s game at Manchester because of the NJSIAA’s concussion rule, Davies will get the start. Kelly could return next week when Lacey hosts Southern.