

Lacey holds off TR East in shootout

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LACEY — It didn't take long for Lacey to find out it would be facing a different Toms River East team than the one that was outscored 86-0 in its first two games.

By the end of an exhausting afternoon, the Raiders pushed the Lions to the limit before Lacey, ranked No. 3 in the Asbury Park Press Top 10, survived for a 45-42 victory in a Shore Conference Class A South game Saturday.

"I think I'm already starting to grow gray hair," said Lacey senior quarterback Tom Kelly, who completed 17-of-25 passes for 291 yards and three touchdowns. "We knew we were in for a battle. A South, you can't take anyone lightly. This team was 0-2 and they played right with us."

After getting shut out in its first two games, Toms River East (0-3, 0-2) scored on the second play from scrimmage when senior running back Matt Gudzak broke free for a 50-yard touchdown run and a 7-0 lead. Gudzak would finish with 182 yards and three touchdowns on 19 carries.

Lacey (3-0, 2-0), though, used its high-powered offense to score 24 straight points. Senior running back Chris Jensen capped the Lions' opening drive with a 4-yard touchdown run to make it 7-6, and Kelly followed his own 59-yard run with a 29-yard touchdown strike to junior Conor Davies, who made a leaping catch over a Raiders' defender at the goal line. Kelly added a 2-point conversion throw to junior Mike Bocchini as the Lions took a 14-7 lead.

On Lacey's next possession, senior receiver Christian Tutela took a Kelly pass 61 yards before making a 9-yard touchdown catch for a 21-7 lead with 2:04 left in the first quarter.

Lacey added a 40-yard field goal by sophomore Pat Davis to take a 24-7 lead, but no lead would be safe against the Raiders. Toms River East pulled to within 24-21 on Gudzak's 2-yard touchdown run and senior quarterback Jerry Caporale's 10-yard touchdown pass to junior Jeff Wood, the second score following a fumble recovery off a Lions kick return.

The Lions then faced a key fourth-and-2 play at their 36 late in the first half. After a series of timeouts, Kelly took a sneak 3 yards for a first down. Kelly followed with five completions for 65 yards, including an 11-yard touchdown pass to Bocchini with 25 seconds left before halftime for a 31-21 lead.