

Experienced Lions ready to seize their chance

By ROBERT ZIEGLER • STAFF WRITER • December 3, 2010



Lacey senior quarterback Craig Cicardo has guided the Lions to an 11-0 record. Lacey, seeking its first NJSIAA sectional title since 2006 and fourth overall, hosts Delsea today in the NJSIAA South Jersey Group III final. (STAFF PHOTO: KEITH J. WOODS)

Craig Cicardo was in eighth grade when he stood on the sideline and watched Lacey beat Seneca, 12-0, to win the 2006 NJSIAA South Jersey Group III championship and put the finishing touch on a 12-0 season.

Today, Cicardo, in his third season as Lacey's starting quarterback and the leader of an experienced group that has been waiting for this opportunity, will try to repeat history when the Lions host Delsea at 1 p.m. in the South III final.

The senior, who has accounted for 1,689 yards of offense and 32 total touchdowns, has been the leader of an offense overflowing with playmakers, from running backs Jarrod Molzon and Jake Dabal to receivers Zach Torrell and Cameron Blackwell.

Lacey has outscored its opponents this season by an average of 28.9 points and only one team — Winslow in a sectional semifinal — has managed more than seven points against a defense that's among the Shore Conference's best.

Those numbers are even more dominant than those of the 2006 team, and Cicardo said there's a number of similarities between the teams.

"We have a lot of skilled athletes like that team did," he said. "We have great receivers, a great backfield, a great offensive line like they did. They had a great defense. We have a great defense. We're a very similar team."

Perhaps the biggest similarity between Lacey in 2006 and 2010 is the chemistry on the team, no doubt a product of the relationships forged over time between the players.

Cicardo, Dabal, Molzon, Torrell, offensive lineman Brian Mykoliw and linebacker Matt Uveges are all three-year starters.

"Having the kids here (on varsity) for three years is always a good thing," Lacey coach Lou Vircillo said. "They give you a real good shot at having the great leadership you need that develops the character that you need."

Lacey also boasts a handful of two-year starters, including two-way lineman and defensive standout Dave Vieira, linebacker Tony Pierce, offensive lineman Mike D'Addario and wide receiver/defensive back Pat Jensen.

It's a group that went from a 6-5 record as sophomores to an 8-3 mark and a trip to the sectional semifinals last season. Now, the deep senior class is in position to win the best kind of title, one with a lot of close friends.

"It means everything," Vieira said. "Freshman year we went undefeated, eighth-grade year we went undefeated. It's what we want to do, go undefeated and win a state championship."

Robert Ziegler: 732-643-4266; rziegler@app.com; www.twitter.com/ZieglerAPP