

# Kelly, Lions' fortunes change in second half

7:20 PM, Oct. 15, 201

Written by Steven Falk | Staff Writer

**TOMS RIVER** — Tom Kelly knew the first half was not good for either him or his Lacey teammates on Saturday at Toms River East's Dvorak Field.

"I guess there was nerves in the first half, sophomore quarterback, young, that kind of thing," said Kelly, who is a sophomore and the starting quarterback for the Lions. "I'm not going to use that as an excuse. There was no reason to throw that one interception. It was terrible."

Kelly, who went 0-for-5 with an interception as Lacey compiled just 64 yards of total offense and one first down in the first half, went 2-for-3 for 83 yards and two touchdown passes in the second half.

He also scored on a 2-yard sneak as the Lions rallied from a seven-point halftime deficit and defeated Toms River East, 28-7, in a nondivisional game.

"I came out in the next half, and I guess, I stood in the pocket and did what I had to do," Kelly said.

Kelly made what might have been the game's biggest play in the third quarter when he fired a 20-yard TD pass to Joseph DeTroia on a fourth-and-5. Lacey (3-3) had gone without points in the first half when it started two possessions inside the Toms River East 20. It was Lacey's first TD in seven quarters.

"It was supposed to be a skinny post and DeTroia made a good read and cut inside the safety," Kelly said.

A blocked extra point left the Lions trailing, 7-6, but its defense and special teams kept giving them the field position they would need.

After Toms River East (1-4), which was going into the wind, failed to run out the final seconds of the third quarter, a fumbled punt snap gave the Lions the ball at the Raiders' 18.

Four plays later, Kelly snuck in from the 2 and his 2-point conversion pass to Jake Timony gave Lacey a 14-7 lead with 10:47 remaining.

The Lions, who remain in contention for an NJSIAA South Group III playoff berth and play arch-rival Central next week in a game that will go a long toward determining how the Class B South race will shake out, got the ball right back in excellent field position after they recovered the ensuing kickoff at the Toms River East 32.

Two plays later, junior tailback Kyle Spatz (170 yards on 33 carries) scored on a 35-yard run to make it 21-7.

Kelly capped the scoring when he lofted a 63-yard TD pass to 6-foot-3, 225-pound senior tight end Jake Powell.

“I think what you will find out about the kid (Kelly) is that he’s very determined, very intelligent and that he has a very competitive mindset,” said Lacey coach Lou Vircillo.

Toms River East built its 7-0 halftime lead on a 37-yard TD run on a “Jet Sweep” by Jerry Caporale with 5:03 left in the first half.

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