

Lacey-Barnegat showdown highlights busy weekend



Lacey running back Jarrod Molzon breaks away for a 68-yard catch-and-run against Manchester. Lacey and Barnegat square off in a showdown for first place in Class B South. (JERRY WOLKOWITZ/SPECIAL TO THE PRESS)

Asbury Park Press - By STEVEN FALK • STAFF WRITER • October 7, 2010

Barnegat has played 43 varsity football games in its five seasons of having a varsity team.

None of those games, including an NJSIAA South Group I first-round game at Paulsboro in 2006, have been bigger than the one it will play tonight when it hosts Lacey in a showdown for first place in Shore Conference Class B South.

The first meeting between the two schools, located less than 10 miles apart in Southern Ocean County, figures to fill the 3,000-plus-seat bleachers at Barnegat.

It is also the Game of the Week on APP.com and will be broadcast live on 105.7 FM The Hawk and 1310 AM.

"It's huge," said Barnegat coach Rob Davis. "When we started this program, we kind of wanted to be like Lacey down the road. It's something the kids always said. They are a class-act program that continues to win."

Other key games this weekend are Red Bank Catholic at Freehold on Saturday in Class B North; Rumson-Fair Haven at Monmouth Regional on Saturday in a nondivisional game that will have major ramifications in the Central Group II playoff picture; Matawan at Long Branch in another game that will also have an impact in the Central Group II playoff race and Manasquan at Shore in a nondivisional game.

Lacey (4-0, 3-0), ranked No. 2 in the Asbury Park Press Top 10, has outscored its opposition, 148-13. It is ranked fourth in the Shore in both total offense and defense.

Barnegat (3-0, 2-0), behind Tulane University-bound quarterback Nick SanGiacomo, is ranked No. 1 in the Shore in total offense.

"They're definitely at another level. We want to get to that level," said Davis, who was an assistant at Lacey to long-time head coach Lou Vircillo for six seasons from 1997-2002. "It's going to take us time, but being in a game like this in just our fifth year says a lot about our kids."

"He's (Davis) done a great job developing that program from the ground up," said Vircillo, who is in his 30th season as the only head coach Lacey has ever had and is in his 35th season as a head coach.

Barnegat, with its spread offense, will likely test the Lions' secondary early and often

SanGiacomo, in his third year as a starter, is second in the Shore in both passing yards and TDs with 906 and 10 respectively.

Senior wide receiver Mike DeTroia, who has received offers from both NCAA Division IA and IAA schools, is SanGiacomo's favorite receiver. He is third in the Shore in receptions with 18 and first in receiving yards with 401. He also has four TDs.

"Most high school defenses are based on defending the run," Vircillo said. "When you face a team that passes the ball more than it runs, you now face personnel changes. You have to determine if you can pressure the quarterback. If you can't pressure him, you have to show different coverages."

"They are an outstanding defensive team. They don't have any weaknesses," Davis said. "Their strength is they are very fast."

Lacey's spread offense, which emphasizes the all-around abilities of senior quarterback Craig Cicardo, will present Barnegat's defense with a multitude of problems.

Cicardo has combined rushing and passing for 744 yards and 14 TDs. He is 23-for-30 for 470 yards with seven TDs and no interceptions passing and has rushed for 274 yards and seven TDs on 61 carries.

Senior running back Jarrod Molzon has combined for 437 yards rushing and receiving and six total TDs on just 21 touches of the ball and senior running back Jake Dabal has 280 yards and a pair of TDs.

Red Bank Catholic will try to grind out the yardage on offense behind senior tailback Andrew Casten, who is fourth in the Shore in rushing with 552 yards.

Its defense, ranked No. 3 in the Shore in yards allowed, will have to contain the running ability of Freehold quarterback Sterry Codrington.

Monmouth Regional (3-0), off to its best start since it began the 2006 season 6-0, is currently third in the Central Group II power rankings.

However, a loss on Saturday could put it in a perilous position as far as earning the second playoff berth in school history goes. The Falcons play Neptune (2-2), Red Bank Catholic and Long Branch (2-2) the next three weeks.

"It's a big game that carries a lot of power points," said Monmouth coach Sal Spampanato.

Rumson (2-2), which was defeated by No. 1 Matawan, 48-21, last week, is currently sixth in the Central II power ratings.

It meets Holmdel and Raritan the next two weeks. Both of those teams are competing for spots in the Central II playoffs.

"Every game for us now is basically a playoff game," said Rumson coach Shane Fallon. "Our kids are treating it like it is the first round of the playoffs."

The game will feature two of the top 12 quarterbacks in the Shore in passing yards. Rumson's Mike Villapiano is fourth with 669 yards. Monmouth's A.J. Visconti is 12th with 451 yards. Rumson's Jack Wise is No. 1 in the Shore in receptions with 24.