

Lacey takes undefeated season into SJ III final

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Lacey's Jarrod Molzon stretches for extra yards against Winslow on Saturday. The Lions advanced to the Dec. 4 South Jersey Group III semifinals against Delsea Regional. (STAFF PHOTO: PETER ACKERMAN)

LACEY — The Lacey Lions showed Winslow Township why they are top seeded and undefeated.

The Lions rolled to their 11th victory, downing the fourth-seeded Eagles, 34-14, in the NJSIAA South Jersey Group III semifinals Saturday.

Lacey will host second-seeded Delsea Regional (10-1) in the championship game 1 p.m. Dec. 4.

Lacey has won three sectional titles, all in SJ III. The Lions hope to finish unbeaten for the third time. They went 11-0 in 1989 and 12-0 in 2006.

Quarterback Craig Cicardo Jr. led the Lions on Saturday, running for two touchdowns and throwing for another score. Seconds after the victory, he hugged his dad, Lacey offensive coordinator Craig Cicardo Sr., a former Lacey quarterback.

"He has worked so hard with me in the four years I have been here," Cicardo Jr. said. "He works extra time to help make us the team we can be."

"We have the essential components of teamwork in all aspects of the game," said 30th-year Lacey coach Lou Vircillo, who began the program. "Our boys are not selfish. Our boys play for each other. We have a group of three-year players who have added the leadership that's necessary for success. All year, the boys have developed themselves physically and have sacrificed quite a bit."

Lacey scored on the game's initial series of downs for a 6-0 lead with 9:07 left in the first quarter. Senior running back Jake Dabal scored on a 17-yard dash, capping an 8-play, 69-yard drive. Senior Jarrod Molzon kicked the extra point.

The Eagles (6-4) replied with a 14-play, 73-yard drive, cutting the lead to 7-6 on an 18-yard touchdown pass from senior quarterback Bill Belton to senior wide receiver Devante Waugh with 4:14 to go in the first quarter. Sharif Williams' PAT tied the game at 7-7.

The Lions swung ahead for good, 13-7, when Cicardo Jr. passed the ball over the middle to senior wide receiver Deon Smith for a 20-yard touchdown with 11:53 to go in the first half. Molzon's PAT made it 14-7 after an 8-play, 54-yard drive.

Molzon's 44-yard field goal pushed the lead to 17-7 with 3:22 to go in the first half. Cicardo stretched the lead to 23-7 with 2:28 left in the third quarter with a 2-yard run. Senior Matt Ruhnke kicked the extra point after the Lions went 70 yards on 10 plays.

Molzon kicked a 33-yard field goal with 8:55 to go in the game for a 27-7 lead. The Eagles pulled to within 27-13 with 6:42 to play on Belton's 8-yard touchdown pass to junior wide receiver Billy Johnson. Williams booted the extra point.

Cicardo Jr.'s 17-yard touchdown run with 2:43 to go expanded the lead to 33-14. Ruhnke nailed the extra point.

Belton completed 31 of 45 passes for 281 yards and tossed two interceptions.

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