

## Tradition Never Graduates - Lacey Football Preview

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Considering what Lacey lost to graduation following last season's 12-0 South Jersey Group III championship campaign, it would be understandable if the Lions took a step back.

Well, to outsiders maybe. You certainly won't find anyone with tempered expectations within the Lions' proud and tradition-laden program.

"The players graduate but the tradition and the expectations stay the same," said senior lineman Lex Knapp.

Yes, Lacey will have to replace great players such as Craig Cicardo Jr., Jarrod Molzon, Jake Dabal, Matt Uveges, Mike D'Addario, Dave Viera, Zach Torrell and several more, but the cupboard is far from bare even if the names aren't yet of the household variety. Just four players with starting experience return in 2011, but there are many players from an undefeated JV team that will now get their chance on varsity after waiting behind last year's stars.



**Seniors Jordan Powell (left) and Tyrell Smith lead what should be another strong defensive unit.**

"We've seen a lot of improvement from the younger guys," said senior Jordan Powell. "We are the ones with the experience and we know what it takes to be successful, so it's our job to lead by example."

Another major change comes on the coaching staff where Jason England will take over as the offensive coordinator for Craig Cicardo Sr, who is now coaching at The College of New Jersey. Cicardo humbly played a big role in Lacey's success over the years, but England was also involved in the game plan process and the kids know him well.

"He was the one looking down from the booth and giving Coach C the calls so we're very confident with him," Knapp said. "He's going to do a great job."

This year Lacey will be going back to its traditional power I-formation running attack after using some spread and zone-read over the last few seasons to take advantage of its personnel. The Lions have two quarterbacks that will see time in sophomore Tom Kelly, who is more of a passer, and junior Brandon Boos, who brings more of a multi-dimensional look to the offense. The fullback will be senior Jake Timony, who was injured last year. Also seeing time at fullback will be junior Tim Grochowski and junior Liem Dolly. The starting tailback is slated to be junior Kyle Spatz, who starred at the youth and JV levels. Also seeing time at tailback will be sophomore Chris Jensen, the younger brother of former receiver Pat Jensen, and sophomore Dillon Popper.

The receivers are 6-foot-1 junior Luke Fernandez and senior Joe DeTroia, with the 6-foot-3, 225-pound Powell returning as the starting tight end.

The offensive line features two returning starters and three seniors, and should once again be a strength of the team. Senior Tyrell Smith, a 6-foot-5, 300-pound behemoth who is one of the top offensive line recruits in the state, will be the left tackle and 250-pound senior Jake Fernandez will be the left guard. At center is Knapp, an all-Class B South selection by the coaches last season. The right guard was slated to be senior Evan Bahrle but a bicep injury has him sidelined for an indefinite period. Starting in his place will be junior Tyler Walsh. The right tackle will be 6-foot-2, 260-pound junior Joseph Elefante.

"It's going to be that traditional Lacey offense where we just pound it down your throat," Knapp said.

When you think of Lacey one of the first things that comes to mind is an aggressive and physical defense. Even with so

many new players on that side of the ball it is still a sure bet the Lions will once again field a stingy defense that is a tough matchup for opponents.

The Lions will continue to employ a 3-4 base defense and will have three players working in at nose tackle. Senior Robert McCarthy, a 260-pounder, Grochowski and Bahrle have all been in the mix for the starting spot. The defensive ends are Smith, Knapp and Fernandez in a rotation. There will be three players that will work in at inside linebacker starting with Timony. Walsh and Dolly are both competing for the other starting job but will see time regardless of who wins out. Powell is a returning starter at outside linebacker and he will be joined by either junior Casey Sirotniak or senior David Pankow.



**Junior tailback Kyle Spatz will run behind a solid offensive line as Lacey goes back to its I-formation roots this season.**

In the secondary, Jensen and Boos will be the cornerbacks and the safeties will be Fernandez and sophomore Chris Tutella, with Spatz also seeing time.

"We're going to come after you on defense," Smith said. "We're like trained killers."

Lacey had an elite kicking duo last season with Molzon and Matt Ruhnke, so a lot will fall on the shoulders of Dolly, who will be the new placekicker. Timony will be the punter.

Lacey is once again the favorite in Class B South but will face stern tests from Barnegat, Brick and Manchester. The Lions also have a very tough nondivisional schedule with Neptune, Middletown South and Wall. All of those teams will certainly like to get back at Lacey for the defeats suffered last year.

"The way we killed teams last year, we know everyone is going to be coming for us," Smith said.

"Every team is going to come out and bring their best against Lacey," Jake Fernandez said. "So we have to be ready every practice and every game."

**Head coach:** Lou Virillo, 31<sup>st</sup> season (35<sup>th</sup> overall)

**Career record:** 244-106-3

**Coaching staff:** Jason England (Off. Coord.); Shane Allen (DL/OL/ST); Al Hagofsky (RB/LB); Joe Tobin (WR/DB); Watson Heilala (OL/DL); Danny Fornoff, Mike Fumarola (Freshmen); Lee Emery (Athletic trainer).

**2010 record:** 12-0 (5-0)

**Random fact:** Lacey has won four state titles, 11 division titles and made the playoffs 19 times in its 30-year program history.

**BIG SHOES TO FILL:** There are several new players on the roster for Lacey, but junior quarterback Brandon Boos certainly has a lot to live up to following three-year starter Craig Cicardo Jr.

**X-FACTOR:** Getting the new players up to speed. It's hard not to have faith in Lacey's great coaching staff, but there are many first-year varsity players on the roster this season.

**IMPACT NEWCOMER:** Kyle Spatz, Jr., RB/S. Running back is the glamour position at Lacey and every player over the last six or seven years to play tailback for the Lions has put up big numbers.

**PIVOTAL GAME:** Sept. 10 vs. Wall. This is a great week one matchup that will tell us a lot about both teams.

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