

PRESS RELEASE

January 15, 2015

ESSEX COUNTY FREEHOLDERS HONOR THE VERONA HIGH SCHOOL STATE CHAMPION FOOTBALL TEAM

(Newark, NJ) – During its Wednesday, January 14, 2015, meeting at the Hall of Records, the Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders honored the Verona H. S. Football Team for winning the North Jersey Section 1, Group 1 State Championship. The Board's Commendation was presented by District 4 Freeholder Leonard M. Luciano of West Caldwell.



The undefeated Verona H. S. Football Team was honored by the Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders for winning the North Jersey Section 2, Group 1 State Championship during a presentation at the Hall of Records in Newark on Wednesday, January 14th. The Board's Commendation was sponsored and presented by District 4 Freeholder Leonard M. Luciano of West Caldwell (back row, center). PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

The Hillbillies won the school's 9th state championship when they defeated Cresskill High School, 20-0, on Saturday, January 15, 2015, at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford. In state tournament play the 2nd-seeded team first defeated Pompton Lakes H. S. (39-7) and then shut out Becton Regional H. S. (22-0), before toppling top-seeded Cresskill in the championship game to complete its season undefeated, the first time in school history, with an 11-0 record.

During the team's historic season it outscored its opponents by a lopsided 368-93, won the school's 11th Super Essex Conference Colonial Division Championship, and finished the season ranked by *The Star-Ledger* as the #1 Group 1 team in New Jersey.

The team's accomplishments were further highlighted by the naming of 19 individual players to State All-Group 1 and All-Conference teams: All-Group 1 1st Team Offense – Frank Ferrari; All-Group 1 2nd Team Defense – Matt Riccitelli; and by the Super Essex Conference Colonial Division: 1st Team Offense – Frank Ferrari, Sam Cummings, Mike Cifaretto, Matt Intili and Kyle Brennan; 2nd Team Offense – Dave Gautieri, Chris Luehs, Luke Connell and Bill Ferrari; 1st Team Defense – Jim Crawford, Nick DePaul, Sean Crawford and Matt Riccitelli; 2nd Team Defense – Mark Riggio, Chris Valentine, Matt Zaccone, AJ Pengue and Collin Kiernan; and Honorable Mention – Mike Carlucci. Frank Ferrari was also presented with the Maxwell Club's "Maxwell Award" as one of the Top 50 football scholar-athletes in New Jersey.

Freeholder Luciano introduced the team as a "pretty amazing group of athletes" who completed a season "of total domination" in finishing their undefeated at 11-0. He remarked that he was able to attend to of the team's home games and went on to say, "To all the young men, I want to congratulate you for your great season and wish all the graduating seniors great success in all your future endeavors. We are really proud of your accomplishment and hope to see the underclassmen back here again *next* year!"

Speaking on behalf of Head Coach Lou Racioppe, who was unable to attend the presentation, Assistant Coach Ray Bowes thanked the freeholders for having inviting the team to their meeting, saying, "It really is quite an honor." He pointed out that the entire program was undefeated this year, both the JV and Varsity football teams, adding, "We couldn't have done it without a tremendous effort from the Administration, the parents, and of course the players, who bought-in to what we were trying to accomplish and demonstrated great senior leadership and chemistry." Addressing the players, he concluded by saying, "This was quite an accomplishment, and we are so proud of you."

Senior Captain Frank Ferrari, speaking on behalf of his teammates, also thanked the freeholders, saying, "It's amazing that you're recognizing us for our great accomplishment." He went on to add, "We've put in so much hard work, and especially us seniors... we've been going at it for four years... and we finally got it done this year." Ferrari also thanked the coaching staff for disciplining the team throughout the year with hard work, "and for helping us to trust each other and build chemistry. We did, and we got it done at the end of the year."

The Verona High School Football Team was comprised of the following members: Seniors Chris Bujnowski, Bill Ferrari, Frank Ferrari, Pat Cummings, Jim Crawford, Matt Intili, Luke Connell, Mike Cifaretto and Matt Riccitelli; Juniors Chris Valentine, Nick DeVivo, Sean Crawford, John DeMartinis, Anton Valentine, Mark Riggio, Brian Valentine, Anthony Giuliano, Nick DePaul, Chris Luehs, Kyle Brennan, AJ Pengue, Sam Cummings, Dave Gautieri and Mike Carlucci; Sophomores Collin Kiernan, Joe Whelan, Zack Zaccone, Chris Aldiero, Nick Lanese, Austin Camp, Matt Gautieri, Zach Skrivanic, Matt Zaccone and Mike Stanisci; and Freshmen CJ Lavery, Steven Priscoe, John Gabriele, Frank Gabriele, Adam Kazanfer, Matt DiDia, Cullen Pelfree, Dan Gibson, Billy Fauerbach, Jack Swanstrom, Andrew Luehs, Aydin Sidali, Nick Galluccio, Joe Zecchino, Robert Coppola and Cullen Pelfree. The team was coached by Head Coach Lou Racioppe and Assistant Coaches Ray Bowes, Chris DeMond, Dan Corrado, Mitch Roshong and Jason Calo (Athletic Trainer).

Freeholder Luciano was elected to his second term as District 4 Freeholder in November 2014. He represents the towns of Caldwell, Cedar Grove, Essex Fells, Fairfield, Livingston, Millburn, North Caldwell, Roseland, Verona, West Caldwell and West Orange.

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