

Warren Wolf game film collection traces local football history

Stephen Edelson

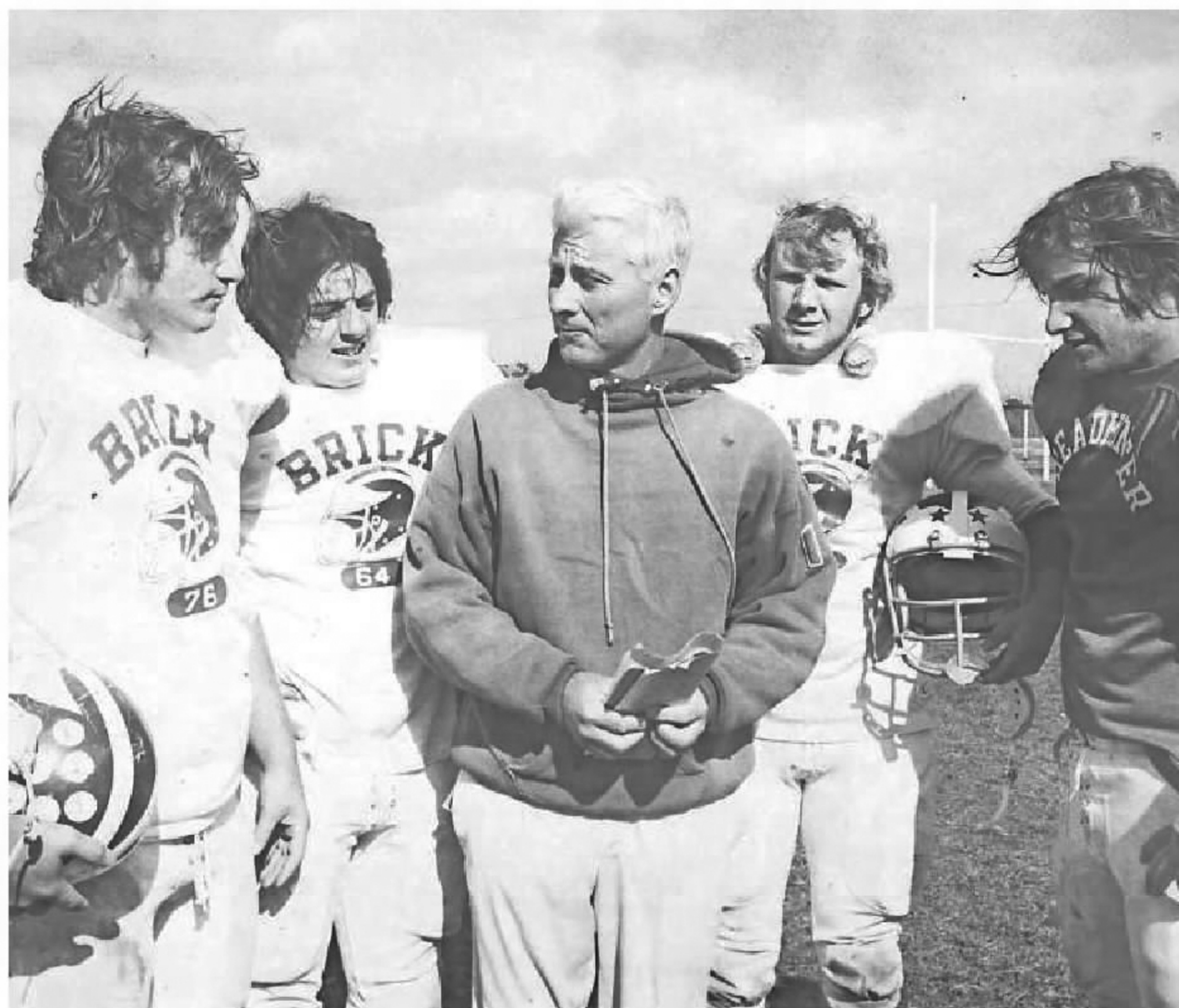
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An unrivaled video collection provides a roadmap through Shore Conference football history, featuring hundreds of hours of footage that weaves a path connecting some of the most important games and iconic players over six decades.

That's why the Football Film Project, currently digitizing the archive of Brick High School game films from legendary coach Warren Wolf's 51 years on the sideline, is so important in preserving the glorious past of high school football at the Jersey Shore.

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Brick Twp. High School coach Warren Wolf goes over game plans with (left to right) Dennis Filippone, Paul Lawrence, Mark Heil and Steve Filippone on Nov. 7, 1973. (staff photo: Bob Davidson) ASBURY PARK

History

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And for a program that won 361 games under Wolf, including eight undefeated seasons, six NJSIAA South Group 4 titles and 25 Shore Conference divisional titles, countless defining moments are being preserved for future generations.

There's Harry Mattson's scoop-and-score on a 44-yard fumble return in Brick's dramatic 21-20 win over Camden in 1974 at Atlantic City's Convention Hall in the first-ever NJSIAA playoff game.

Footage exists of Cherokee's fourth-quarter extra point hitting the upright in 1983 as Brick, then the two-time defending NJSIAA South Group 4 champs, ended the Chiefs' 30-game winning streak, 7-6.

And there's the 1973 game at Montclair when Brick's 28-game winning streak came to an end, with a Montclair assistant coach coming off the sideline to tackle a Brick defender returning an interception late in the game.

You can see Art Thoms, a future Super Bowl champion with the Oakland Raiders, play on the unbeaten 1963 team, and the precision the Green Dragons exhibited under Wolf, who died at age 92 on Nov. 22, 2019.

It's all there.

From the 'dungeon'

Wolf's son, Warren C. Wolf, sorted through the collection, including everything from reel-to-reel films and VHS tapes to smaller cassettes, housed in the basement of his parents' home in Brick, which was ground zero for the program that put Shore Conference football on the map.

"The 'dungeon' was what we called the basement where my father worked," Wolf said. "He was down there all the time. Kids would go down and watch the film. When we had the reel-to-reel, Sunday nights they would come here and they would watch it on a projector in the living room."

Pat Toland was a multisport standout at Middletown North, who led the Lions to a perfect football season in 1983, winning the NJSIAA Central Group 4 title.

For more than 20 years he's been doing highlight films for players, as well as collecting and digitizing whatever old game film he could get his hands on.

So as Toland handles the conversion process, he understands better than most what this treasure trove of celluloid represents.

"While some of the more traditional football schools have kept them, the game films are gone at many schools and you can't get that back," said Toland, currently working on archival game film projects with other area programs, including Manasquan and Mata-

wan.

"Sometimes they were just thrown out. Some programs didn't care so much about football or had a lot of coaching changes and so many times they were just kind of swept out for whatever was next."

Brick has more than 85 percent of the game films since Wolf founded the program in 1958. The first films are from the 1959 season, right through Wolf's final season at Brick in 2008.

Work to be done

The collection, however, is not complete. Only the first half of the 1974 Camden game is there, for example, with some game films having been turned back in since word got out about the project.

"Someone from the 1979 team had film along with a camera," Wolf said. "Bits and pieces have started to come back."

"Whatever we had we gave to Pat Toland and he is digitalized everything for us. Now we're trying to raise money (\$15,000) to pay him, and any excess money will be used for scholarships. There's the original Warren Wolf Football Scholarship, and then three years ago we started Brick United to raise money for both Brick and Brick Memorial students going to college or vocational schools."

The plan is to make the videos available on the internet to anyone, although

the details of how to do that are still being worked out.

The history of Brick Green Dragons' football is a big part of local athletic lore. And it's not just former Brick players and their families who might be interested, with opponents from throughout Monmouth and Ocean counties getting an opportunity to see games involving their teams from the past.

"Our main thing is to pay Pat so the films are ours and we can do what we want with them," Wolf said. "The question is how do you get them out to people and make money."

"Once we can put it on a website where you can go watch a game from 1967 and it would be free, and we can ask for a donation that go to scholarships for Brick and Brick Memorial athletes."

"The way I look at it, if you played against us why wouldn't you want to donate. You can watch your game against Brick when you were a senior, so I think for those who played against us it would be worth a donation."

Anyone interested in donating to the project or the scholarships can find more information at www.BrickUnited.org.

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