

St. Joseph of Montvale football coach Tony Karcich steps down after 29 years

Gallery: St. Joseph (Mont.) football coach Tony Karcich steps down

By Matthew Stanmyre/The Star-Ledger
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The two years working on Wall Street helped fill his bank account, but Tony Karcich felt empty without football. He missed teaching lessons to young men and the long afternoons stomping over the fresh grass.

After nine seasons and three state championships as head coach at Bergen Catholic, Karcich stepped away from coaching in 1983 and 1984 to work for an investment bank in Manhattan and earn a better salary for his young family.

In 1985, an administrator from St. Joseph Regional High School called Karcich, offering the head coaching job and competitive pay. Karcich was easily sold. He made his foray back into coaching and never left the sidelines, winning 17 state championships, building the Montvale school into a national powerhouse and becoming one of New Jersey's most decorated coaches over the next 29 seasons.

Karcich's remarkable run ended this morning when he resigned as coach at St. Joe's.

Over his career, he won 20 total sectional titles and has guided six teams that finished the season ranked No. 1 in the state — [including each of his last two at St. Joe's.](#)

Karcich said he's stepping down because "it's time" and he needs a break from the nonstop demands of coaching.

"It's not another job," Karcich said. "It's not that I'm ill. It's just wear and tear of 29 years. I need a break."

Karcich also announced today that his handpicked successor, Augie Hoffmann, is taking over as head coach at St. Joe's.

Karcich, meanwhile, will remain on as athletic director at the school, and he left open the possibility of returning to coaching down the line.

“I don’t know what the future holds,” Karcich said. “I don’t want to use the word ‘retirement’ because I have a lot of energy and I have a lot of love and passion for this game. So I don’t want to rule anything out for the future.”

Hoffmann, who played under Karcich at St. Joe’s from 1995 to 1999 and has been a member of the coaching staff the past five seasons, said he has mixed emotions about taking over for his mentor.

“My first thoughts are: Can there be bigger shoes to fill in a job?” Hoffmann said. “I don’t think so. But luckily the blueprint for success is here. We are going to do things the St. Joe’s way.”

Karcich won 338 games in 38 seasons as a head coach, and his teams at St. Joe’s were regularly among the state’s best. Players say Karcich was a demanding coach who instilled life lessons about hard work and accountability.

“He taught me how to be a man and have discipline,” [St. Joe’s senior wide receiver Quai Jefferson said](#). “Discipline is not just on the field. That comes off the field too and follows you through your whole life. He’s always preaching about doing things the right way and not taking the easy way out.”

A linebacker in his younger days, Karcich played football at Hackensack High in the 1960s and moved on to Syracuse, where he was teammates with Giants coach Tom Coughlin and former NFL star Larry Csonka.

After college, Karcich began coaching in 1970 as an assistant at Hackensack under Mike Miello.

From there, Karcich quickly moved up the coaching ranks and took over at Bergen Catholic at age 26.

“He had the same tenacity, the same enthusiasm, the same passion that he did right up until the last game he coached,” Miello said.

This season’s St. Joe’s team was considered one of the best in New Jersey history until it was upset on Thanksgiving by rival Don Bosco Prep. The Green Knights (10-1) went

on [to defeat Pope John, 62-14, to win the Non-Public, Group 3 championship](#) and finish No. 1 in New Jersey.

“I’m stepping down at a good time,” Karcich said. “You like to step out of something when you’re on top.”