

Coach Lee Owens

1988 - 1991 – Won 35, Lost 13, Tied 0

Lee Owens to accept Massillon position

By Chuck Nelson
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Lee Owens will accept, officially, the position of head football coach and athletic director at Massillon Washington High School at a special session of the school's board of education at 6 p.m. today.



Owens, in an exclusive interview with the Lancaster Eagle-Gazette Thursday night, confirmed that he had decided to take the job, considered by many people to be the top high school post in the country.

"I'm going to go," Owens said Thursday. "I'll go up there tomorrow and make it official.

"I'm very indebted to this community and I know that. There's no way in the world that I wanted to leave. I have a strong desire to stay in Lancaster.

Lee Owens - Massillon Record

| Year | Won | Lost | Tied | Points | |
|-------|-----|------|------|--------|------|
| | | | | Mass. | Opp. |
| 1988 | 7 | 3 | 0 | 236 | 129 |
| 1989 | 10 | 3 | 0 | 343 | 197 |
| 1990 | 8 | 4 | 0 | 335 | 159 |
| 1991 | 10 | 3 | 0 | 464 | 182 |
| Total | 35 | 13 | 0 | 1378 | 667 |

Winning Percentage
72.9%

"I would not have considered any other high school in the country. I wish the opportunity) wouldn't have happened when it did.

"I don't know what swayed the decision in the end, I really don't," Owens said. "I don't know what they were finally able to say.

"They finally convinced me that I was foolish if I didn't take advantage of the opportunity, that I was cheating myself, my career, my family."

Owens, 31, will replace John Maronto as coach of the Tigers. Maronto resigned the post after three seasons.

When Owens takes over the program, he will be guiding it through the second year of a two-year probationary period imposed by the Ohio High School Athletic Association for recruiting violations.

The probation period, which would keep Massillon out of any post-season play, was one of the factors that made Owens turn down the job offer earlier. Though he says it still bothers him, he sees the time as an opportunity to get the program back on its feet.

"I told (some of the Lancaster players) when I talked to them tonight that it's going to be tough when we come down here to watch them in the playoffs and we didn't have a chance to go," Owens said. "But the time just seems so right because you've got that year to mend.

"It's a tremendous challenge. It's a tremendous opportunity."

Owens called a meeting of the football players Thursday afternoon to tell them he had decided to take the job.

"I had not made a decision until I walked in the room with the players," Owens said. "They took it hard, like I really expected them to take it."

"I announced that I was going to go toward the middle of the meeting. Toward the end of the meeting, I had an opportunity to sense the disappointment and discouragement they were feeling and made a very emotional statement that I wouldn't go, that I would stay and that was my final decision.

"Someone said, 'Are you sure you want to do that?' I said, 'Yes,' and walked out.

"A couple coaches followed me out and asked me if I was sure that's what I wanted to do because they didn't want me to make a decision I was going to regret. And then a couple of the players came out later and said they felt bad that they reacted the way they did. They would hope that I would go. They were disappointed, but they saw that it was a great opportunity."

Owens said he has been offered a three-year contract worth \$45,000 a year. He will also have use of a car and will control a budget of \$200,000 for the football program.

Owens said assistant coaches Tom Stacy and Greg Gillum will also be given an opportunity to go to Massillon with him. Both coaches came to Lancaster with Owens from Galion.

"I had to make sure I had the opportunity for both of those gentlemen to go to Massillon with me and both have that," Owens said.

Lancaster Superintendent John Baughman said a search committee would be formed immediately to find a successor to Owens.

I think a lot of Lee and I do sincerely wish him good fortune," Baughman said this morning. "We're obviously sorry to lose him."

Owens has a career coaching record of 54-20-2 in seven years as a head coach. He took his 1985 Galion squad to a 14-0 season and the Division II state championship and guided Lancaster to a 7-3 record last year.

Several thousand people are expected to turn out to greet Owens upon his arrival in Massillon tonight. Television news crews from the Cleveland area, reporters from six daily newspapers and a number of radio representatives are expected to be on hand as well as the Tiger football squad and the school's marching band.

Lee Owens – Head Football Coach 1991

Thirty-one year old Lee Owens, a Mansfield native, was recently selected as the Head Football Coach and Athletic Director at Massillon Washington High School.

During the 1987-88 school year, Lee was the Lancaster High School Head Football Coach and Director of their drug and alcohol prevention program. In 1986, Coach Owens was the Athletic Director and Head Football Coach at Galion High School. Prior to that, he was a teacher/football coach at Ashland Crestview and Waynesfield Goshen high schools.

During his seven-year tenure as a head coach at three high schools, he has compiled a record of 54-19-2. Coach Owens is noted for his aggressive defense, solid kicking game, and innovative offense. He has coached two winning all-star teams, two undefeated teams, three playoff teams, and one state championship team. His 1985 Galion Tigers won the Division II State Championship. They finished the season 14-0, upsetting perennial state power Youngstown Cardinal Mooney. As a result of this 1985 season, Coach Owens was selected as the Ohio AAA Coach of the Year.

Lee Owens' enthusiastic style of working with young people is reflected in the many motivational talks he has given throughout the state. He and his wife, Dianne, have three children: Ben (7), Andy (4), and Leanne (2).

- Age at Massillon Hiring – 32
- High School Athlete – Mansfield Madison
- College – Bluffton
- Asst. Coach – Waynesfield Goshen
- Asst. Coach – Ashland Crestview
- Head Coach Galion High School – 1985 Ohio AAA Coach of the Year
- Head Coach Lancaster High School – 1987 – 88
- Head Coach Massillon High School – 1988 – 91 (Record 35-13-0)
- Asst. Coach Ohio State University
- Head Coach University of Akron

- Head Coach Ashland University

Lee Owens – Head Football Coach

1991

During the past 10 years Lee Owens has been the head football coach at four different high schools in Ohio and compiled a record of 79-29-2.

He began his head coaching career at the age of 24 with Ashland Crestview School that had little winning tradition. In his second season, 1982, Crestview had its best season ever (10-0). They were ranked third in the state and recorded eight shutouts.

This success led to an offer at Galion High School, where he became the youngest head football coach in their history. In his third season, 1985, the Galion Tigers went 14-0 and won the state championship. Lee Owens was given the key to the city and was selected as the AAA coach of the year in Ohio.

In 1987 Lee Owens went to Lancaster and led the Gales to a (7-3) season where they ended up ranked 10th in the state and missed the state playoffs by less than one point. Moreover, it was an exciting season that thrilled the Lancaster fans.

Again, it was hard for Coach Owens to move on but, the offer to coach the tradition-rich Massillon Tigers was simply too good to refuse.

At that time the Massillon Football Program was facing adversity and mediocrity. Massillon had lost to their traditional rival, Canton McKinley, four straight years.

In just three seasons Lee Owens led the Massillon return to prominence. The Tigers have defeated McKinley in two of the past three years. During the 1989 season the Tigers qualified for the State Playoffs for the first time since 1982. They won the Regional Championship and then lost to National Champion Cleveland St. Ignatius in the State Semi-Final Game. In 1990 the Tigers once again qualified for the State Playoffs, and advanced to the Regional Finals.

In addition to winning teams Lee Owens has been successful in building positive attitudes concerning the players on his team, the future of the program, and the quality of the coaching staff.

In all four schools, the football program was able to generate more income from attendance than before. In all four schools offensive records were shattered. In all four schools improvements were made to the facilities. And at all four schools the image of the team was improved in class, commitment, and discipline.

During the past three years as Athletic Director Lee Owens has made many changes. The women's sports program has been expanded and greatly improved. More attention has been paid to the Jr. High School athletic programs. Once again the Athletic

Department is on a sound fiscal plan. Furthermore, Coach Owens helped to initiate a community wide effort to privately fund more than \$800,000 for improvements to the Athletic Complex at the Stadium. These improvements included Artificial Sand Turf, a rubberized track, Musco lights, public address system, rest rooms, and a new press box facility. These improvements enabled Massillon to host the 1990 and 1991 State Football Championships.

Lee Owens has always been involved with his church and with community agencies on chemical awareness. He is a member of the Jaycees, Eagles, Elks, Lions, Moose, Boys Club, Massillon Club, Elms Country Club, and several professional and booster organizations. He is an active Rotarian.

Coach Owens is a member of the Youth Center Board and the Physical Committee for the YMCA. He is also on the Advisory Committee to the Sports and Law Program sponsored by the State Attorney General.

Lee Owens believes in promoting education, athletics, and positive attitudes at every possible opportunity. During the past 10 years he has gladly accepted invitations to speak to colleagues at coaching camps, clinics, service clubs, church groups, youth groups, booster clubs, assemblies, graduations, banquets and award ceremonies.

Fortunately, Coach Owens has been blessed every step of the way with very supportive family and friends. He and his wife Dianne have four children Ben 10, Andy 7, Leanne 5 and Molly 1.