

Tenaflly High School hires football coach with extensive NFL experience



Darren Cooper

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Alonso Escalante went from coaching football in high school to the NFL and back again.

The 35-year old Glen Rock native was approved as new head coach at Tenaflly by the Board of Education on Monday night. He takes over one of North Jersey’s oldest and proudest programs, but one that hasn’t reached the playoffs since 2009.

“We will turn into a winning program by taking it one day at a time,” Escalante said. “It’s all about building a community and a culture. I have to start there. Culture is what you do every day. I am excited about it.”

The Escalante File



Coming out of Glen Rock High School in 2005, Escalante planned to wrestle and play football at Springfield College in Massachusetts, but hurt his back a month before workouts started. His college coach offered him a job as a student assistant coach and his career began.

Escalante graduated from Springfield and got his master's degree from McDaniel College while working as an assistant there. He was selected to receive the Bill Walsh Minority Coaching Fellowship in the NFL, which turned into a two-week internship with the Giants during training camp.

That opened the door to connections that led to assistant coaching jobs with the Oakland Raiders (2011) and Tampa Bay Buccaneers (2012-2013). After 2013, he came back to work at his alma mater and at Fair Lawn.

Back to the pros

Escalante returned to the NFL in 2016 as an offensive assistant the New York Giants. He later spent a year on staff with the Arizona Cardinals (2018) and Cleveland Browns (2019). He worked as an analyst at the University of Missouri early in 2021, then became assistant running backs coach with the Carolina Panthers under Matt Rhule.

Escalante and his wife Jennifer, the Giants' vice president of strategic communications, wanted to settle back in North Jersey. Escalante took a position on the staff at DePaul working under Nick Campanile in a variety of roles, and the Spartans won the Non-Public B state championship in 2022.

When the Tenafly job came open, Escalante thought it was the perfect fit.

“The reason I got into coaching is to use football to make people’s lives better and I mean that in all sincerity,” Escalante said. “That has been my driving force at every level, whether it’s high school or college and that’s what I am going to do here. New Jersey is home to me. High school football is near and dear to me.”

Taking over in Tenafly

Tenafly has been in a difficult spot in the North Jersey football hierarchy with an enrollment that places the school at a high level despite not having many players in the program.

The Tigers went 3-6 in 2022 competing in the Super Football Conference American Red Division after two successful years in the SFC’s Ivy Division for struggling programs. Ivy Division can't play in the state playoffs. Tenafly went 6-4 in the Ivy Red in 2021 and 8-0 in the Ivy White in 2020.

Escalante is already watching Tenafly film (it’s what he loves to do) and working on building a staff. He will be a PE teacher at the school.

“This is a special group,” Escalante said. “We are very excited about getting started working with them. When you take over a program, it all starts with the people and the players. I want to provide them with the best opportunity to be successful on the field and off. The best programs I have been a part of, the players have had just as much success off the field as on. That’s what we will be building here.”