

Jersey Shore is summer home to many athletes and coaches

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Ron Jaworski subscribes to the mantra that "Life is Better in Flip Flops."

When he's not playing golf at one of the four courses he owns in South Jersey, studying tape at NFL Films or trying to bring an Arena Football League to Atlantic City, the former Philadelphia Eagles quarterback can be found at his summer home in Stone Harbor.

"It's my escape," Jaworski said. "As soon as I drive over the (96th Street) bridge into Stone Harbor, I start to relax. I take off my suit and tie, put on a pair of shorts and flip flops and unwind. There's nothing better."

Jaworski is among a large number of current and former professional athletes and coaches who own vacation homes at the Jersey Shore. Whether they wear ice skates, baseball spikes, basketball sneakers or wingtips, there is sand in those shoes.

Some have been there for decades, others a few years.

Former Flyers goalie Bernie Parent, 73, was among the first to spend his summers at the beach. He first visited Cape May in late 1960s when he was introduced to deep-sea fishing by former South Jersey Marina owner Dick Weber.

Parent owned a home in Wildwood Crest for years. He and his wife, Gini, now spend a lot of time now on his gorgeous, 45-foot boat, "French Connection."

A number of Flyers followed him toward the southern exits of the Garden State Parkway.

Danny Briere (Longport), Jeff Carter (Sea Isle City), Bobby Clarke (Ocean City), Ron Hextall (Somers Point), Tim Kerr (Avalon), Rick MacLeish (Avalon), Don Saleski (Avalon), Dave Schultz (Somers Point), Dennis Seidenberg (Margate), Rick Tocchet (Ocean City) and Justin Williams (Ventnor) are among those who had or have homes that feature views of the ocean or bay.

"It's just a good area, a good place to enjoy the summer," Williams, who now plays for the Carolina Hurricanes, said in a 2012 interview with The Press. "And you just seem to make a lot of friends here."

Jaworski is among several current and former NFL players who can hear the waves from their living rooms.

Most recently, retired defensive end Trent Cole bought a place in Avalon. An avid outdoorsman, he's often steering his boat offshore in search of tuna.

That group also includes Baltimore Ravens quarterback Joe Flacco (Avalon), former Oakland Raiders quarterback Rich Gannon (Ocean City). Atlanta quarterback Matt Ryan (North Wildwood) and San Francisco offensive lineman Mike McGlinchey, his cousin, have been visiting the shore since childhood.

"My family has had a house there for a long time," Ryan said in a 2016 interview with The Press. "I enjoy spending a few weeks down there whenever I can."

Former Eagles linebacker Bill Bergey started the NFL trend. He started spending his pre-training camp summers in Avalon in the 1970s.

In 1977, he asked new Eagles quarterback Ron Jaworski to visit.

"When he said the Jersey Shore, I had no idea what he was talking about," Jaworski said. "I'm from Lackawanna, New York, I went to Youngstown State (in Ohio) and I started my NFL career in Los Angeles. I had never heard of the Jersey Shore. But once I got there, I fell in love. I bought a place in Avalon, then moved to Cape May, and bought a place in Stone Harbor in 2000."

Summer shore residents also include current and former college basketball coaches such as University of Connecticut women's coach Geno Auriemma (Avalon), former Villanova men's coach Steve Lappas (Ocean City) and current Villanova coach Jay Wright (Ocean City).

Lappas, now an analyst for CBS Sports, first visited the area in 1984 when a friend invited him to North Wildwood. He was so impressed by South Jersey beaches that he eventually bought a place in Ocean City in 1996. He can usually be found at Great Bay Country Club in Somers Point with former Flyer and current analyst Steve Coates.

"We raised our kids at the Jersey Shore," Lappas said. "They've spent so much time here that when our daughter Kristen got married last April, she insisted that she had to have the wedding at Congress Hall in Cape May. She wouldn't consider anywhere else."

Lappas' summer neighbors in Ocean City include his successor at Villanova.

Wright has been coming to the beach for years and is also a frequent visitor to the tennis courts at Ocean City High School.

Wright's been coming to the shore so long that he's considered a local more than a celebrity.

That was proven when he took his wife Patty to The Crap Trap in Somers Point just after winning the first of his two national championships with Villanova in 2016.

"We were meeting them for dinner," Avalon resident and Villanova graduate Dave Coskey said with a laugh. "When we saw him at the bar, Jay was holding one of those buzzers that go off when your table is ready. He had to wait just like everybody else."