

Class A, B, C State Semifinal Previews

June 7, 2007

WEST ISLIP VS. YORKTOWN

Time/Place: 8 p.m. tonight at Hofstra.

At Stake: A berth in Class A state championship game.

Records: West Islip, 20-1; Yorktown, 12-9.

Players To Watch: West Islip – Justin Turri, Nicky Galasso, Brian Caufield, Ryan Flanagan; Yorktown -- Brendan Kurpis, Rocky Bonitatibus, Nick Newman.

The Matchup: If this game is close, it will be a surprise. West Islip rarely plays truly competitive games for four quarters, and that's playing a schedule predominantly against Conference I Long Island teams, traditionally much stronger than teams from Westchester. It won the Suffolk title by seven goals over Ward Melville (a team that beat Yorktown by five) and the Long Island final by 11 goals over Syosset. Yorktown, a usual Section I power, has had a down season at 12-9. It has played much better of late. Yorktown's only chance – to keep it competitive -- is to play a major slowdown game and hope West Islip's recent poor play in the first half of games continues into the second half. If West Islip loses this game, it's a huge upset.

Did You Know? West Islip has won four straight Long Island Class A titles.

Newsday's Pick: West Islip.

HUNTINGTON VS. JOHN JAY

Time/Place: 3:30 today at Hofstra.

At Stake: A berth in Class B state championship game.

Records: Huntington, 20-0; John Jay, 20-2.

Players To Watch: Huntington – Shamel Bratton, Rhamel Bratton, Sean Brady, Zach Howell; John Jay -- Chris Bocklet, Brian Douglass, Kevin Stockel, Ryder Bohlander.

The Matchup: Teams from Westchester typically can't compete with the best of Long Island. John Jay is the exception. Though it lost last year in a Class A semifinal to West Islip 13-1, this year's John Jay team is much better. It's a legitimate team and is ranked No. 6 in the nation in the STX/Inside Lacrosse national poll. These two teams played on

March 31 and Huntington, the No. 1 team in the national poll, won 9-6. It was the closest game Huntington has had all season. That being said, if Huntington plays close to its best game, it should win. With Shamel and Rhamel Bratton, Zach Howell and Sean Brady, it's hard to imagine Huntington's 63-game streak coming to an end on Long Island. This remarkable group is two games away from an undefeated three-peat. After Huntington's 14-6 win over Garden City, Shamel Bratton said Huntington still hadn't played its best. That's a scary thought.

Did You Know? John Jay has never won a game on Long Island.

Newsday's Pick: Huntington.

SHOREHAM-WADING RIVER VS. RYE COUNTRY DAY

Time/Place: 5:30 p.m. today at Hofstra.

At Stake: A berth in Class C state championship game.

Players To Watch: Shoreham-Wading River -- Nick Madden, John Austin, Joe Lustgarden, Matt Vernam. Rye Country Day School -- J.P. Garry, Cody Levine, Chris Seter and goalie John Herbster.

The Matchup: Shoreham showed how complete a team it is during its victory over Cold Spring Harbor for the Long Island Championship. The Wildcats boast a superb offense led by finishers Nick Madden and John Austin. Its emphasis on ball movement and passing is a perfect fit for excellent feeder Joe Lustgarden. Shoreham rarely settles for bad shots and will work for the point blank ones. Goalie Lee Malandrino is coming off a stellar performance against Cold Spring Harbor. If he continues to play close to that level, Shoreham could ride him to a state title. Matt Vernam is great emotional leader and a do-it-all defenseman. Rye has some quality offensive players in J. P. Garry, Cody Levine and Chris Seter, but will have a tough time against Shoreham's defensive pressure and Malandrino. Levine had four goals and three assists in a 15-2 win over Masters (Dobbs Ferry) during the season. Rye goalie John Herbster is solid, but should struggle if Shoreham's offense can find the seams in the Rye defense.

Did You Know? Rye lost to Cold Spring Harbor 11-6 in last season's state semifinal.

Newsday's Pick: Shoreham-Wading River.