

## **Girls Class C Final**

# **Shoreham-Wading River grabs first state title**

BY ERIK BOLAND

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CORTLAND, N.Y. -- The since-graduated Emily Schaknowski stood in the sun after the Shoreham-Wading River girls lacrosse team lost to Skaneateles in last year's state semifinals. She saw the big picture of what her senior class helped accomplish for a program that four years earlier had not been known for much.

"We helped put Shoreham-Wading River on the map for girls lacrosse," Schaknowski, now at Delaware, said at the time.

The Wildcats appear to be there to stay.

Behind a fearsome backer's zone defense that coach Bob Vlahakis lost confidence in a season ago but stayed with throughout this one, SWR captured the program's first state championship Sunday - and the school's second in a two-day stretch - with an 11-9 upset victory over two-time defending Class C champion Skaneateles).

The victory was historic in another sense. No Suffolk girls lacrosse team had ever won a state title since the tournament began in 1995. Coupled with Garden City's victory in the Class B title game, it was the first time since 1999 (New Hyde Park and Garden City) that two Long Island teams captured titles upstate.

"Our program is growing every single day," said Rutgers-bound attack Kristen Anderson, who had four goals and was named the tournament MVP. "We finally made it. My dream come true, basically. It's everyone's dream to end on a win and we did."

Skaneateles (21-2) came in as the heavy favorite and scored the game's first two goals, but unblinking SWR had the score knotted at 4 by halftime, then grabbed the lead on goals by Brittany Davis and Marie Cordaro to open the second half. The Lakers tied it at 7 with 16:36 left, but with Davis - headed to Delaware - controlling the draw, SWR went on a 4-0 run with goals by Anderson, Cordaro, Brittany DeLea and Jen DeVito. DeVito's tally, off a fast-break feed by Kait Brosco, made it 11-7 with 9:47 left.

Skaneateles, aided by some SWR turnovers, got to 11-9 with 1:46 left, but the Wildcats' defense - on which there are no seniors - mostly controlled an attack that had been held to fewer than 10 goals just once this season, and featured Hofstra-bound senior attack Stephanie Rice, who entered with 110 goals and left with 111.

Sophomore goalie Michelle Verbeeck was again superb, making 11 saves. Not bad, senior attack Kathleen Wallace said admiringly, for someone who was "on the bubble of making varsity this year. She's been doing a great job."

"It's not just the goalie's work," Verbeeck said. "My defense in front was amazing. I can't say any more about them."

Junior defender Jane Moldovan said: "We know our offense can score and we know our defense, with Michelle behind us, we can stop anyone if we put our heads to it and we did it today."

Vlahakis, a formerly successful boys and girls soccer coach who started learning girls lacrosse only since taking over the program four years ago, has built a power in Shoreham. His program compares favorably with other Island girls lacrosse elites such as Northport, Farmingdale, Manhasset, Garden City or Rocky Point, though he'll never admit it.

Said Vlahakis, "We still like to fly under the radar."

Unlikely.

As Wallace said, "With our boys winning, too, that makes our school pretty famous."

With a permanent spot on the map.

### **CLASS C STATE CHAMPIONSHIP**

At Cortland

Shoreham-Wading River -- 4-7 - 11

Skaneateles -- 4 5 - 9

Goals - SWR: K. Anderson 4, Cordaro 2, E. DeVito, DeLea, B. Davis, J. DeVito, Rochler; Sk: Johnson 3, Nangle 3, Tierney, Rice, Vitkus. Saves - SWR: Verbeeck 11; Sk: Vaughn 2, Mullen 1.