

Pride's big season reminds Untersteins of state title run in 2002

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The right sleeve of Bob Unterstein's blue sweatshirt looks like it could have been part of a yardstick at one point. Just off the shoulder is the number 33. Below that is 34. Closer to the elbow is 35.

"It's tough for a dad to be in my situation and not blow his stack, but my wife keeps me in check" he said, fighting hard the urge to gush.

It's been a wild season for the Hofstra men's lacrosse team, which began the season by falling out of the national rankings before winning 16 straight heading into Sunday's NCAA Division I Tournament as the No.3 seed with a home game against Providence. But whatever excitement, joy, pride and anticipation the team has brought to its fans, Bob and Linda Unterstein from Shoreham have felt it threefold. Their three sons - senior attackman Chris Unterstein and twin sophomore midfielders Mike and Kevin - have been a huge part of Hofstra's success.

Can you blame the guy for wearing his heart, and the uniform numbers of his boys, on his sleeve? "With the success we've had and all of the accolades, I know it's made them proud," said Chris, who finished the regular season tied for second in the nation in scoring with Hofstra teammate Athan Iannucci at 4.24 points per game. "They're on Cloud Nine."

They've been there before. In 2002, the boys were all key contributors to the Shoreham-Wading River state title team. "This year, in so many ways, really reminds me of that season," Linda Unterstein said.

The Untersteins may share a last name, but their skills and personalities are quite different. Chris has become a classic attackman who can dodge or feed and manages the offense from behind the cage, scoring 38 goals with 34 assists this season. Mike is a scoring midfielder with quick feet; he's posted 10 goals and 11 assists. And Kevin is a grunt at defensive midfield, where he scoops up ground balls (a team-high 78), plays the wing on faceoffs and tortures opposing offensive players. He's also scored three goals.

Off the field, Chris is an introspective finance major, mild-mannered and soft-

spoken. Mike and Kevin are fun-loving charmers with grins as big as their wide-open eyes. The twins' deceptively sturdy 5-11, 160-pound frames underlie a toughness that shows itself with crushing hits and diving hustle on the field. They routinely switch hairstyles, and this season Kevin's long, straight brown hair which he routinely runs his fingers through has played into a misleading too-cool-to-care attitude.

"If you were choosing up sides for a pickup basketball game and didn't know anybody," Hofstra coach John Danowski said, "Kevin Unterstein would be the last guy you'd pick."

Having three brothers on one team may not be unique, but it is different. The coaching staff calls them The Hansons after the goofy brothers from the movie "Slap Shot." Hofstra assistant coach Joe Amplo, himself a twin, was the one who assigned the brothers uniform numbers in sequence (in high school, Kevin wore No.7 because it rhymed and coaches could remember who was who). The Pride locker room has always been divided into attackmen, midfielders and defensemen until this season, when Chris was stuck with the midfielders and a locker right next to his brothers.

"Watching how close Kevin and Michael have become makes the fact that I never played here with my brother one of my biggest regrets," said Amplo, who was recruited out of Sachem to play at Hofstra with his twin Chris, who sat out his first season before transferring to Adelphi.

With all Hofstra has accomplished, Bob Unterstein said there is one thing missing.

"I keep waiting and hoping for all of them to score in the same game," he said. "They've come close, but that would be the icing on the cake.

"What more could a father ask for?"