

SWR goalie Longo comes up big against Comsewogue

BY BOB HERZOG

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You could make a nice dance video out of Nick Longo's acrobatic moves Wednesday. To the left . . . to the right . . . up high now . . . down low.

Longo, the two-time All-County goalie for Shoreham-Wading River, was footloose all day. He made 15 saves, many of them on point-blank shots, and helped the visiting Wildcats defeat Comsewogue, 9-6, in Suffolk Division II. SWR improved to 6-0 overall, 4-0 in league play. Comsewogue fell to 4-3, 2-2.

"Usually our defense forces shots from outside, but today they got a lot of close-in shots," Longo said. "Those are always tough."

Longo was tougher, especially in the first quarter when the Warriors took 10 shots and dominated time of possession but only scored once, in the final minute, to make it 1-1 after 12 minutes. "He was the difference in the game," Comsewogue coach Pete Mitchell said. "We could've really jumped on them in the first quarter. We had plenty of opportunities but he stopped us."

Longo stopped Connor Duddy and Tom Cleary from close range early in the opening period, robbed Cleary again on a long shot and steered away a hard shot by Dan Rodriguez. His teammates were having some trouble adjusting to Comsewogue's zone defense and didn't start applying pressure until the second quarter, when goals by Kyle Sopko, Mike Perdie and Joey Lustgarten gave SWR a 4-2 halftime lead.

Comsewogue could have kept it even closer if not for a spectacular save by Longo against Rich Carlson, who broke free and fired low and hard. Longo kicked the ball away. He also came up big in the fourth quarter after Comsewogue cut its deficit to 7-5. Longo made a pair of saves on high shots by Cleary and Carlson in one 30-second span and goals by Lustgarten (two goals, two assists), Perdie (three goals) and Sopko (two goals) allowed the Wildcats to pull away.

Lustgarten, who had a flashy unassisted goal late in the third quarter when he intercepted a pass from goalie Cory Banwaree and drilled home a low rocket, observed, "We had to work to get our offense going, but it all started with Nick in the cage."

Sopko's fourth-quarter goal, which made it 9-5, was particularly satisfying to Longo because his save and clearing pass helped set it up. "If you make a save, get a quick outlet pass and a score, everyone gets a little rowdy and you know you did something good," Longo said.