

## Boys Lax: SWR tops Mt. Sinai 6-3 in opener

*Longo shines in net in first start*

By Joe Werkmeister

MOUNT SINAI--Nick Longo couldn't explain how he stopped it. So often in lacrosse the front of the cage looks as crowded as a New York City subway at 5 p.m. on a Friday.

It was that crowded at the start of the fourth quarter Wednesday afternoon at Mount Sinai, with the Wildcats holding a two-goal lead. The crowd came charging in front of Longo, a junior for Shoreham who was making his first career start in goal.



Shoreham-Wading River midfi elder Mike Perdie tries to move past Mount Sinai defender Connor Fitzgerald in the Wildcats' 6-3 win.

One shot came flying. It bounced out. Then another came. Then another.

Longo somehow closed the door on all three rapid-fire shots. A minute later, the Mustangs would be down two men on penalties. They never got as good a scoring chance again. The Wildcats would score with 5:31 left for the final margin, a 6-3 victory in their season opener.

"I don't even know what happened," Longo said of his three saves to start the fourth. "I just did not want that ball going in the goal."

As far as debuts go, Longo's (14 saves) will rank up there with any of the talented goalies who have patrolled the goal for Shoreham in the past.

The Mustangs are better known for their defense rather than their offense, but holding any team to three goals is an impressive accomplishment.

"[Longo's] very poised, always in position and very tough to put the ball by," said Shoreham coach Tom Rotanz.

It was an impressive performance all-around for the Shoreham defense, the one spot that was most depleted from last year's team. In practice the Mount Sinai coaches preached shooting low, but too often saw their players trying to rip a hard shot and subsequently shooting too high.

"They get in the game and they all want to blow the ball by the goalie," said Mount Sinai coach Joe Cuzzo.

Longo was admittedly nervous for his first game. After making his first save, the butterflies began to dissipate.

"I was nervous when I woke up this morning," he said.

"For the first game jitters, it was nice for him to play well," Rotanz added.

On offense junior Joey Lustgarten picked up where he left off last year by scoring a goal with three assists. He assisted on a score by junior Nick Guiffrida that made it 6-3 and provided some breathing room in the final five minutes.

The Wildcats knew goals would be hard to come by against a talented defensive unit like Mount Sinai.

"We tried to get our middies to handle the ball a little more," Rotanz said. "Obviously we just had some jitters."

Shoreham and Mount Sinai is always a strong rivalry, so it was no surprise when a big crowd turned out on a chilly night. Rotanz and Cuzzo have known each other for many years dating back to Rotanz's days at Ward Melville. Both share great respect for each other.

"I think the world of Joe Cuzzo and what he's meant to me as far as a player, as a coach and as a friend," Rotanz said.

When Cuzzo coached at Ward Melville, his Division I teams never faces Rotanz' Division II Wildcats in a meaningful game. That changed last year. Rotanz now holds a 2-0 lead against Cuzzo in the Shoreham-Mount Sinai rivalry.

"Tommy did a great job with that program," Cuzzo said. "When you play them you know you're playing a well-coached team that's going to hustle. I thought we ran with them step for step."

The Mustangs led briefly 1-0 at the start on a goal by junior Michael Chapman. The Wildcats tied it two minutes later when junior Nik Mullen scored off a Lustgarten assist.

The score was tied 2-2 in the second when the Mustangs retook the lead on a man advantage. Lustgarten's second assist went to midfielder Kyle Sopko.

Penalties were a problem for Mount Sinai most of the game, although the coaches disagreed with plenty of the calls throughout the game.

"Our man down needs a lot of work," Cuzzo said. "We were happy with our six-on-six defense."

Lustgarten scored with 9:08 left in the third to put Shoreham ahead 4-2. Junior Mike Perdie followed with a goal off an assist from Mullen to make it 5-2 with 6:43 left.

Chapman answered with his second goal a minute after Perdie to bring the Mustangs back within two.

The Mustangs had opened their season with a non-league win against Connetquot March 28, 10-2. For the Wildcats it was their first action at all since the start of practice nearly a month earlier.

Mount Sinai's road doesn't get any easier coming up. The Mustangs travel to Huntington Friday and Sayville Tuesday. The Wildcats travel to Hauppauge Friday before their first home game Tuesday against Huntington.