

called a time out down 22-18. A block by Valiunas and a kill by Geslak brought the Pats within two,

the Patriots never recovered. "We're slowly maturing as we go along this year," coach Chacon, who has had to replace five starters this season, said.

Will Stiritz had 28 assists, 20 digs and nine kills as Eastport-South Manor won 18-25, 25-15, 25-22, 25-17. Scott Williams added 22 kills for the Sharks.

Standout coach takes on new challenge at Mt. Sinai

BY ROBERT LEUNER

High school lacrosse coaching legend Joe Cuozzo has a new home. One year removed from the head coaching duties at Ward Melville, Cuozzo, 68, will take over the reins at neighboring Mount Sinai beginning this spring. Mount Sinai Athletic Director Scott Reh announced earlier this month.

"He brings instant credibility to the program," said Reh. "He's won at every level and his knowledge and track record speaks for itself. I'm very excited to have him here."

Cuozzo replaces Jason Sanders, who succeeded Mike Hoppey last year when Hoppey was awarded the opportunity to coach at Ward Melville. Although relieved of his head coaching duties at Ward Melville, Cuozzo remained a part of the program, serving as associate head coach to assist Hoppey with the transition.

"Why did I accept the position?" said Cuozzo. "I still wanted to coach. I'm not ready to stop coaching yet. I had heard over the summer that the position at Mount Sinai would open up and if it did I would apply."

"Joe had expressed an interest in the program and that's how it all got started," said Reh. Cuozzo had also entertained a position at Locust Valley in Nassau County.

In his 37 years at Ward Melville, Cuozzo amassed an incredible record of 699 wins against just 73 losses, earning seven New York State titles, 22 Suffolk County championships and 15 Long Island titles along the way. Cuozzo is currently completing work, with co-author John Westermann, on a non-fiction book called *The Ward Melville Diaries* about his last two seasons coaching at Ward Melville.

"It was my distinct pleasure to work with Joe for the past five years," Ward Melville Athletic Director Don Webster said. "He is an outstand-



Joe Cuozzo, former Ward Melville lacrosse coach, will head the program at Mount Sinai.

ing coach and individual and he created quite a foundation here for one of the finest programs in the country."

It will be hard to improve on Mount Sinai's 2005 season. The Mustangs compiled a Division II record of 12-2 (14-3 overall) and advanced to the Suffolk County championship game before losing to Shoreham-Wading River.

"It's not like I'm taking on a program to rebuild it," said Cuozzo. "They have been successful before. The next step is to get them into the county finals and win it. I'm also hoping to ex-

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Pats blank Centerreach

BY ROBERT LEUNER

The Ward Melville Patriots field hockey team held off a late second half surge by host Centerreach to hang on and defeat the Cougars, 4-2, on October 24. Shaylyn Blaney's two second-half goals were the difference. The Patriots then defeated Sachem East, 3-2, two days later to improve their record to 12-2 (14-3 overall). Centerreach, which lost to Smithtown West two days later, stands at 4-11, 4-13.

"It was so nice to play on this surface," said Ward Melville head coach Nancy Cole, referring to the new artificial turf recently installed at Centerreach High School. "Our stick work and speed really shows up on this type of surface."

The Patriots dominated the first half of play, firing 13 shots at Centerreach goalie Colleen Kelleher. Kelly Granviller put Ward Melville on top at 17:51 on an assist from Emilee Rahner. The score followed a period of sustained offensive pressure by the Patriots that included four Ward Melville corner attempts.

Rahner increased Ward Melville's lead to 2-0 with a score at 11:58. Meghan Broderick assisted on the goal. But the best play of the half may have come from Ward Melville goalie Kaitlyn DeJano who turned away two point blank Centerreach shots late in the half to preserve the Patriot lead.

Ward Melville increased their lead to 3-0 when Blaney tallied an unassisted goal early in the second half. The goal awakened the Cougars, who responded with two unanswered goals from Liz Kang at 21:25 and Mary Bushor at 17:48. Suddenly Centerreach was back in the game, and with more than 15 minutes remaining in the half, they had momentum.

The Cougars nearly knotted the score a few minutes later as Jenn Canarda missed a wide-open opportunity. Centerreach followed Blaney finally put things back in order at 8:56 with a stunning score reminiscent of hockey legend Bobby Hull. Blaney deftly maneuvered through traffic to the top of the circle where she let go a hard slap shot past Lisa Verzino for a 4-2 Ward Melville lead and eventually win. Centerreach never mounted a serious charge after that goal.

"I think we have come a long way since the beginning of the season," said Centerreach head coach Laura Melfi. "It's kind of coming together now. We just haven't had any breaks."

ain made good on
ber 25, the Patriots recovered from a sleepy
0-2 start to beat Longwood on a pair of goals
by Robinson. That day Brentwood tied Sa-
chem East 2-2 on a goal and an assist by Bo-
nilla to claim the League I championship.

CUOZZO

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pose the kids here to high quality lacrosse
by playing some bigger schools."

But one of those schools will not be
Ward Melville. Although a match-up be-
tween the two divisional powerhouses
would have marquee implications, it
would only come as a nonleague game and
have little or no bearing on regular season
standings. "I've loved and appreciated all
my years at Ward Melville," said Cuozzo.
"This is a new chapter in my life and I'm
looking forward to it. Right now we have
no plans to schedule a game with [Ward
Melville]."

Reh indicated that Cuozzo could coach
as long as he wanted and Cuozzo, too, at
least on the surface, doesn't seem to be-
lieve this is a short-term deal.

"I'm a competitive coach," said Cuozzo.
"When I'm confronted with a challenge I
like to work hard at it. I don't think that
I need to prove anything — just continue
to do what I've been doing for a long time
and bring that experience to Mount Sinai.
As long as I am physically able and still
enjoy doing it and meet that challenge I
will continue to coach. Joe Cuozzo is not
over the hill or out to pasture. I still have
the desire, the interest and the energy to
do the job."

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