LI SPORTS

Experiencing First-Year Jitters

N. Babylon and Mt. Sinai stress love of lacrosse

By Tom Rock
STAFF WRITER

Bob MacDevitt might not be a carpenter, but he knows that when you build a house, you don't start with the roof. That's the philosophy of the boys lacrosse coach at Mount Sinai, which is fielding a varsity team for the first time this season. This may be the inaugural year for the team — the roof, so to speak — but for the past three years, MacDevitt and others in the community have been hard at work on the framing and foundation.

"I knew what had to be done," he said. "I wasn't going to come in here and be just a coach. I knew we had to start a little league ASAP and get the right people running the programs."

That's exactly what he did. Three years ago, he started an intramural program for players in grades six through eight, working with them five days a week and holding clinics on Saturdays. The Mount Sinai youth league, which is now run by Tim Henry, has developed into a power of its own and is starting to feed players into the high school.

Mount Sinai is not the only new team in the county. North Babylon, long a power in football and basketball, is fielding its first varsity lacrosse team this year. Though he was not there from the beginning, coach Will Imhoff is relying on the same infrastructure as Mount Sinai.

The two teams met in a scrimmage yesterday, and though Mount Sinai seemed to play better than North Babylon, both teams looked raw and untested.

Both teams have found a modicum of success. Mount Sinai, a Class C school, is 1-6, 1-3 in Suffolk Division III and Class A North Babylon is 2-3, 1-2 in Division II. There is even a possibility one or both could make the playoffs. That doesn't mean there haven't been any growing pains for the club.

"Stick work and experience in game situations has been the hardest thing for us," said MacDevitt, who coached at Oswego State and Longwood before coming to Mount Sinai. "There is a newness we show when playing against kids, some of whom have been playing since the third grade."

The only Mount Sinai player with that experience is Steven Schroeder, son of Longwood coach Al Schroeder.

"It's been a lot of fun getting the program on board and getting a lot of respect for the program," said Steven Schroeder, a junior attackman who has been around the sport his whole life. "We're a first-year program, but we're not a pushover."

At the other end of the experience level is Travis Hassleback, a junior midfielder playing his first season of organized lacrosse. A decorated soccer player at Mount Sinai, Hassleback said he came out for the team after talking to MacDevitt. "It was something new and it sounded good," he said, adding that the toughest adjustment has been in handling the stick.

Imhoff said his greatest challenge is creating enthusiasm for the sport. At North Babylon, most of the football players spend the spring in the weight room. His freshmen are also the first generation of players to come through local youth leagues, so there is hope that the program will be able to compete quickly.

"It's difficult sometimes," North Babylon junior James Kuck said. "Being new, there are a lot of other teams out there that have been into the sport for a long time and are more experienced at it."

Imhoff said North Babylon's first win of the season, 13-7, over Sayville on March 25, was very special because of the effort everyone had put into building the program.

"The guys play so hard, they just expect to win," Imhoff said. "I don't want to stress winning too much because we might not win so many games. But the guys just love to play."

Photo by Joseph D. Sullivan

Mount Sinai's Steven Schroeder, left, drives around North Babylon's Randall Veit during a scrimmage in inaugural seasons of both clubs. Mount Sinai is 1-6; North Babylon 2-3.

Syosset Calls on Muney, Who Saves the Day

Photo by Howard Schnapp

Brad Neumann, who scored three times for Syosset, drives toward Baldwin's goal.

Every time Syosset boys lacrosse coach John Calabria has a question for his reserve goalie, Anthony Muney, the answer he gets back is always the same.

Calabria asks Muney after a shooting drill how his legs feel. The response? "Anything for the team."

SYOSSET	**12**
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When the coach proposed Muney play an understudy role to Dan Loftus four years ago, the senior said, "Anything for the team."

When Calabria asked Muney how he felt after he stepped in for an injured Loftus and made 10 saves in 42 minutes in Syosset's 12-9 win over Baldwin in a Nassau Conference A game yesterday, his reply was typical: "Anything for the team."

"I tell him every day that he is a huge part of the team," Calabria said. "But he really believes it now within himself. With high school kids, things usually go in one ear and out the other. But I really believe that it sunk in now. He really believes that he is part of the team now."

He became a very important part after Loftus, a junior and four-year starter who was All-County last year, slipped and injured his hamstring while trying to clear the ball six minutes into the game. The score was tied at 2, and a game with significant playoff-implications rested on Muney's shoulders.

"My stomach went down," Muney said. "I couldn't believe it. But I had to step it up big for my team. The guys are not just my teammates, they are my best friends. I have a different role on the team. I support them when I can. They all look at me for inspiration and hope. It was my turn to pay them back."

Because the severity of Loftus' injury in not yet know, Muney might be called upon again Tuesday when Syosset faces Oceanside. But, Muney would not voice dissent if Loftus returns.

"It's not a problem," Muney said. It's not my glory how many saves I have. I just want what is best for the team. If it's best to have Dan in the cage, let it be. Whatever it takes for us to win."

Brad Neumann and Steve Cohen each scored three goals for Syosset (2-0). Greg Cohen and Jon Weissberg each added two.

Jared Wilson led Baldwin (0-2) with four goals.

After the game, Muney went home and collapsed in his bed. "I was exhausted. I never went through so much nervous emotion in my life before."

— Chris Antonacci

NASSAU CONFERENCE A

Baldwin	2	1	1	5	— 9
Syosset	2	4	3	3	— 12

Goals — B: Wilson 4, Hoover 2, Riordan, Hannon, Barrow; S: Neumann 3, S. Cohen 3, G. Cohen 2, Weissberg 2, Mann, Finkelstein. Saves — B: Gravano 12, Gucbudia 7; S: Loftus 3, Muney 10.