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MOUNT SINAI 15, HARBORFIELDS 3

Cuozzo gets milestone win

Longtime lacrosse coach posts No. 700, but first for Mustangs

BY MITCH ABRAMSON

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The man never stopped coaching, even after arriving at the historic milestone.

"Take your helmets off," Joe Cuozzo, Mount Sinai's boys lacrosse coach, hollered to his players as a crowd of photographers snapped pictures. "Now they can see you."

Moments before, Cuozzo, 69, had sprinted across the field, leaned over the fence like a college freshman, and kissed his fiance, Lucretia Piper, to celebrate the momentous occasion.

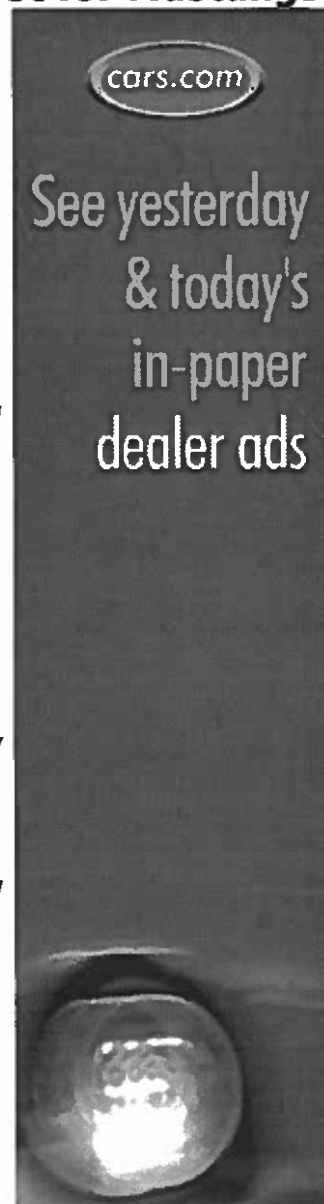
He had won his 700th lacrosse game Wednesday, an unparalleled achievement in national high school lacrosse, as the Mustangs blitzed Harborfields, 15-3, at home in a Suffolk Division II season opener for both teams.

Holding two plaques in his hand, with his baseball cap low over his brow, Cuozzo looked young and vibrant, not at all like someone who should have considerable wear and tear on him after 38 seasons and seven state championships.

"To be honest, this is kind of a relief to get it over with," he said. "It's been a bit of a distraction with the team. This is a real honor, but I'm glad it's over."

As the crowd chanted "700!" with minutes left and the team up 14-3, Cuozzo was still imploring his players to scramble for the ball.

Senior midfielder Tyler McCabe led Mount Sinai with four goals and senior



attack Charles Hoeg, senior attack Brian Horn and junior midfielder Eric Balslov each added three goals.

In winning his 700th game, Cuozzo is one happy coach with a seriously conflicted resume.

He spent the previous 38 years erecting a record of 699-73 at Ward Melville, but he was pushed to become a co-coach last season after retiring from teaching in the district. It wasn't a good fit, and Cuozzo left for Mount Sinai, which has had four head coaches since the school began fielding a varsity team in 2002.

Although Cuozzo says he is fitting in well at Mount Sinai, others have a hard time seeing him in a different uniform.

"He may be wearing the red and black, but we'll always remember him in the green and gold," Ward Melville athletic director Don Webster said in a phone interview Tuesday. "I'm sorry that he couldn't win No.700 at Ward Melville."

Cuozzo still has a heartfelt allegiance to his former school.

"For a while, that was my second home," Cuozzo said on Tuesday. "I miss the freedom of just going there to visit and feeling accepted. Things are a bit awkward now, I have to admit. I still have a mixture of emotions on leaving, but I try not to dwell on it. I'm happy to be here at Mount Sinai."

SUFFOLK DIVISION II

Mount Sinai 1-6-3-5 -- 15

Harborfields 1-0-2-0 --3

Goals - M: McCabe 4, C. Hoeg 3, Horn 3, Balslov 3, Wittpenn 2. H: King 2, Smith. Saves - M: Zoly 4. H: Petsche 4, Campbell 3.

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