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Area athletes met new milestones in '09

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It has been another memorable year in area sports.

Be it on the football field, diamond, track or links, local athletes distinguished themselves. Some of the more memorable stories took place in board offices. And some longtime familiar faces have left the scene as well.

So looking back, here are the top 10 stories from the previous year:

10Woodmore softball-- There was a time in the not-too-distant past where the Wildcats were an easy win for anyone else in the league.

That was most assuredly not the case last year. Woodmore went 18-9 to win a district title. Four of those losses were in the Suburban Lakes League, taking them out of the running for a conference crown, but their postseason run included wins over rivals Genoa and Elmwood. The win over the Royals, in the district finals, was particularly sweet for the Wildcats. The current team had never beaten Elmwood.

Each of those 18 wins was earned by pitcher Sami Michaelis, who will play softball at Belmont Abbey in North Carolina. Michaelis, who was named the SLL's most outstanding player and named to the all-state second team, fanned 286 batters in 181 innings last season. Her ERA was 0.89.

9Bob Bishop retires -- How important was Bob Bishop to the Clyde athletic program? They named the stadium for him.

Bishop retired after more than 30 years as an administrator and coach in the district. He got turf at the field that was named for him. He put up a baseball and softball complex that is the envy of many. He got a new track. Oh, and he won a state football title after being state runner-up the year before as a Fliers football coach. He retired after the 2008-09 school year, and Ryan Greenslade is now the athletic director.

8Oak Harbor wrestling -- At the Division II state wrestling tournament, everyone's fighting for second place after perpetual power St. Paris Graham. The Rockets were pleased as punch with a fifth-place finish with a team with no seniors. Drew Stone -- who verbally committed to Ohio State earlier this year -- finished as a runner-up, while Ian Miller finished third. Mike Mallernee finished eighth in Columbus for the Rockets.

7Plaza Lanes is back -- It was the only bowling center in Fremont when it caught fire in March 2008, and the Rhoad family said almost instantly that they planned to rebuild.

That plan came to fruition in August, when the new 20,000-square-foot bowling center opened. Not only is it a gathering place in the community, but it has allowed for the local return of the Fremont bowling scene. Additionally, area high school bowling teams -- which previously had to travel to Woodville or Sandusky for home matches -- can now play in Fremont once again.

6SJCC golf -- It was supposed to be a rebuilding year. With first-year coach Tom Dudley and a team of two freshmen and three sophomores, not much was expected of the Crimson Streaks. But one of

those freshman was Connor Dudley. All he did was medal at the Midland Athletic League meet as the Streaks finished second. He medaled at the sectional meet as the Streaks again finished second to advance. He qualified to the state meet by shooting 78 at districts. He finished ninth overall in Columbus.

5Mike Gabel steps down -- He's a St. Joseph Central Catholic alumnus. He coached baseball there, leading the Streaks to their first state tournament berth. But he's probably best known for being SJCC's winningest boys basketball coach, compiling more than 200 wins in 18 years, including two Midland Athletic League titles, nine sectional crowns and two district crowns.

Gabel announced his retirement on Feb. 20, after the Streaks' last home game, a 58-43 loss to Seneca East. He remains the principal at SJCC. Jonathan Will, a Sylvania Southview assistant, got the nod to succeed Gabel.

4Sue Wolf leaves Ross -- For the past 34 years, Sue Wolf was a familiar sight on the Little Giants bench. The Ross graduate won more than 300 games at the helm of her alma mater, but had some lean years recently. Her coaching tenure ended abruptly after a 1-20 season, when she refused to sign her coaching evaluation. Ross looked to another alum, hiring boys junior varsity coach Juan Vela to succeed Wolf as the girls hoops coach.

3Erin Pendleton -- As a freshman, she finished fourth in the state in the discus. As a sophomore, she finished second to her sister Emily. As a junior, she won the state title. Last year, she did it again.

For the past six years, the Division III girls discus champion has come from Woodmore. In fact, she's come from the same house. Pendleton closed out her high school career with a record-breaking throw in Columbus for a second straight state title. And now Pendleton, like her sister, is in Ann Arbor to study and throw at the University of Michigan.

But throwers can't quite breathe a sigh of relief yet. Carly Pendleton's throwing too. As a sophomore, she advanced to regionals last year.

2Shifting conferences -- It started in 2008 with Fostoria St. Wendelin leaving the Midland Athletic League and Lakota taking its place. But after events this year, one conference will cease to exist, one has been cut in half, and more changes could come.

Rossford tried to take Lakota's spot in the Suburban Lakes League, but were voted down. Fostoria also went conference-shopping from the Northern Ohio League. They will join with six of the seven remaining SLL teams -- Genoa, Woodmore, Eastwood, Otsego, Elmwood and Lake -- to form the Northern Buckeye Conference in 2011. The other member of the SLL, Gibsonburg, will join the Toledo Area Athletic Conference.

Sandusky was invited to join the NOL after Upper Sandusky and Galion departed. The Blue Streaks accepted, and Napoleon joined the Northern Lakes League. Fremont Ross, Findlay and Lima Senior applied to the Toledo City League, and the Little Giants were accepted. So in 2011, the Greater Buckeye Conference will be down to three teams.

1SJCC football-- The Crimson Streaks were picked to finish in the middle of the pack in the Midland Athletic League. All they did, behind the most potent offense in the league and a stunning defense, was go 9-1 to share the league title and earn a playoff bid -- both achievements for the first time in more than a decade. SJCC beat state runner-up Hopewell-Loudon for the Chieftains' first loss at home in five years, and beat Carey on the road in overtime to garner a share of the MAL.

Coach Todd Drusback was named league and district coach of the year. Running back Zak Bowman was named MAL offensive player of the year, and Isaac Bowling was named defensive player of the year. Both will return for the Streaks, who only had three seniors on the team, next year.