

**HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS SCENE**  
KEEPING KIDS IN THE NEWS

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#### PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Hello sports fans, it's another great day here at High School Sports Scene Magazine.

Everyone here at High School Sports Scene Magazine is hoping you are having a great summer in our magnificent state. What a beautiful summer it has been and is there any place else you would want to be in the summer months than our great state!!! Hopefully everyone is having a fun and safe summer and enjoying time with family and friends.

With school out for the summer we are putting out our end of the year issue that looks back at what a great school year of high school sports we had.

Beginning last fall our local teams and athletes built some memories that will last forever. Who can forget the great seasons that the Lansing Catholic and Pewamo-Westphalia football teams forged? These small-school powerhouses met every challenge and then some as they grinded out championship seasons. What about the St. Louis boys cross-country team that won a second straight state title? Those are a determined group of Sharks. The Okemos boys soccer team also won a state title in thrilling fashion.

The winter season brought even more thrills. Like clockwork, the Lowell wrestling team took their place as one of the premier wrestling teams not only in the state but in the entire country as the Red Arrows marched to a ninth-consecutive state title. The Williamston boys basketball team put together a memorable season as it turned in a perfect record enroute to winning its first state title since 1940. The Fowler girls basketball team captured magic again as it won a second straight state title. What a year it was for the Alma wrestling team as the Panthers reached the team state finals for the first time in program history.

The spring season was full of even more impressive performances. The Williamston girls soccer team showed that persistence pays off as it won the first state title in school history after a number of near misses. The Lansing Christian boys golf team proved it was one of the best teams in the state regardless of school size as it won the Division 4 state title.

As an Ithaca graduate, I was so proud to see what the Yellowjackets' Lani Bloom accomplished this year as she put the finishing touches on an outstanding running career for the ages both in cross country and during the spring track and field season.

There were so many other great performances and you can read all about them in our top 50 stories of 2021-22 article in this month's issue.

For now enjoy the final weeks of summer and we will see you soon.



Randy Miniard  
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and tremendous photography. This paper reaches so many people in our state and it has become required reading with each new issue's release. Their motto says it all: Keeping Kids in the News!

Please feel free to contact me if I can answer any further questions regarding Randy Miniard and High School Sports Scene. Randy and his team are excellent partners and your company would be making an excellent decision in working with this terrific group of people.

Thank you.  
MARK UYL  
Executive Director, MHSAA

# From 1-50 Sports Scene Breaks Down The Top 50 Storylines Of The 2021-22 School Year

## David Cook Sports Scene

1] Williamston boys basketball team wins state title

The Williamston boys basketball team accomplished something that hadn't taken place before even Pearl Harbor and the United States entering World War II as it won the Division 2 state basketball championship. Williamston accomplished the feat in dramatic fashion as the Hornets defeated defending Division 2 state champions Grand Rapids Catholic Central 68-65 to win the first boys basketball state championship since 1940. The win also capped a perfect 27-0 season for Williamston. The Hornets were pushed



to the limit in the championship game as Williamston won every state tournament game prior to the title game by double-digit margins.

2] Lowell wrestling extends state title streak

The beat continues to go on for the Lowell wrestling team that is making it a habit of capturing state championships towards the end of February each year. Lowell captured its ninth straight state title this year with a 46-16 win against Goodrich in the Division 2 state title match. Lowell marched through the finals in Kalamazoo as it defeated Birmingham Brother Rice 68-9 in the quarterfinals and Gaylord 50-6 in the state semifinals. Lowell ended the season with a 23-3 overall record.

3] Lani Bloom wraps up storied career in a big way

One of the greatest runners ever in mid-Michigan, Ithaca's Lani Bloom wrapped up her high school career in a big way. Bloom was the Division 3 individual cross-country

The Lowell wrestling team was not about to be stopped from winning a ninth consecutive state title.

champion and helped the Yellowjackets to a top-ten team finish and then in the spring Bloom helped the Ithaca girls to a sixth-place finish at the D3 track and field championships as she won both the 800 meter and the 1600-meter runs.

4] Williamston girls soccer team wins elusive state title

After coming close several times before, the Williamston girls soccer team broke through this season to win the Division 3 state championship. Williamston defeated Hudsonville Unity Christian, a team it has lost to in the 2008 and 2010 state finals, by a 3-2 score in this year's title match.

5] Okemos boys wins Division 1 soccer state championship

The Okemos boys soccer team saved its best for last as it won the Division 1 state soccer title. Trailing 1-0, Okemos scored a pair of late goals to defeat New Baltimore Anchor Bay and win the third state soccer title in school history. Senior Jack Guggemos led the way for Okemos this year as he scored a school-record 45 goals.



The Okemos soccer team won the Division 1 state championship.

6] Fowler girls capture second straight state basketball championship

The Fowler girls basketball team made it two in a row as it won the Division 4 state championship for the second straight year. Fowler left little to chance in the title game as it defeated Plymouth Christian Academy 61-46 in the title game to end the season with a 24-3 overall record. That title was also the third girls basketball state crown in school history.



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It is my distinct pleasure to provide this letter of recommendation for Randy Miniard and High School Sports Scene. The MHSAA has been a partner with Randy and High School Sports Scene for the past 10 years and this is one of our most treasured and valued partnerships.

This publication does an outstanding job highlighting all the good things going on in the world of high school sports in Michigan. The reach of Randy's publication grows all the time and thousands of kids, parents, coaches and administrators in hundreds of our communities look forward to each new edition. Randy and his staff do an extraordinary job telling the story of high school sports through the written word

and tremendous photography. This paper reaches so many people in our state and it has become required reading with each new issue's release. Their motto says it all: Keeping Kids in the News!

Please feel free to contact me if I can answer any further questions regarding Randy Miniard and High School Sports Scene. Randy and his team are excellent partners and your company would be making an excellent decision in working with this terrific group of people.

Thank you.  
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Executive Director, MHSAA



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The Alma wrestling team reached the Division 3 team wrestling finals for the first time in program history.

7] Alma wrestling team reached state finals for first time in program history

After advancing to the state semifinals the previous two seasons, the Alma wrestling team reached the top of the mountain as it wrestled nationally-ranked Dundee for the Division 3 team state championship. Alma, which ended the season with a 28-2 record, came up short in the championship match as it was unable to keep Dundee from winning a fifth-straight D3 state crown.

8] Midland Dow wins first-ever state hockey title

It was a historic tournament run for the Midland Dow ice hockey team as the Chargers won their first-ever MHSAA hockey state championship. Led by standout goalkeeper Collin Lemanski, Dow defeated Orchard Lake St. Mary's 2-0 in the Division 3 state title match. The shutout was the seventh of the season for Lemanski who stopped 32 shots in the title game.

9] Lansing Christian boys win state golf championship

The Lansing Christian boys golf team was not only the Division 4 champions this season, but they proved to be one of the best high school golf teams in the state regardless of class. The Pilgrims won the Division 4 state title at Michigan State's Forest Akers West course by 24 strokes.

10] Freeland boys basketball team reaches state semifinal

The Freeland boys basketball team turned in a season to remember that culminated with a march to the final four in the Division 2 state tournament. After posting a perfect record in the regular season and winning a league championship, Freeland added district and regional titles in the state tournament. Freeland kept the season going with a win in the state quarterfinals before suffering its first loss of the season

against eventual undefeated Division 2 state champion Williamston in the Division 2 state semifinals.

11] Shepherd girls win state bowling championship

The Shepherd girls bowling team made program history in a monumental way this year. The Bluejays, who had never before even competed in the MHSAA tournament finals, not only qualified for the finals but won the Division 3 girls bowling team state championship. Shepherd put together a dream finals performance as the Bluejays defeated top-seeded Kent City by 12 pins in the quarterfinals and No. 4 seed Flint Powers by 23 pins in the semifinals and then knocked off sixth-seeded Cheboygan by 54 pins in the title match.

12] Pewamo-Westphalia overcomes injuries to repeat as football champs

The Pewamo-Westphalia football team overcame a plethora of injuries to defend their title as Division 7 state football champions. Overcoming a number of key

injuries throughout the season and post-season, the Pirates defeated Lawton 14-10 in the championship game to finish the season with a perfect 14-0 record and claim their fourth state championship in the last six years.

13] St. Louis boys repeat as D3 cross country state champs

The St. Louis boys cross country team defended its title as Division 3 cross country champions. The Sharks were led by Nate March who finished seventh individually and Ben March who placed eighth overall.

14] Lansing Catholic wins D6 football state championship

With an opportunistic and stingy defense leading the way, the Lansing Catholic Cougars won the Division 6 state football championship. The Cougars forced five turnovers in the title game to outlast Warren Michigan Collegiate in a defensive struggle. The title was the third overall for Lansing Catholic and the second in the past three years.



The Lansing Catholic football team won the Division 6 state title.

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Jacob Brya (photo left) of St. Johns and Ryker Johnnecheck (photo right) of Williamston finished their wrestling careers as three-time state champions.



15] Lansing Catholic boys wins D3 track state championship

The Lansing Catholic boys track team won its second state championship in the last 10 years as it edged Saugatuck for the Division 3 state title by a single point. The state title was the second for the Cougars who won the state title in 2012.



The Beal City baseball team set a record for runs scored this season.

16] Jacob Brya, Ryker Johnnecheck wins third individual wrestling titles

St. Johns senior Jacob Brya and Williamston senior Ryker Johnnecheck closed out their high school wrestling careers as three-time individual state champions. Brya won the 140-pound title in Division 2 this season while Johnnecheck won the 145-pound title in Division 3.

17] Gladwin boys bowling team wins state crown

The Gladwin boys bowling team continued to make its impact on the school's trophy case as it won the third state title of any sport in school history by winning the Division 3 boys bowling team state championship. The Flying G's defeated a pair of familiar squads at the finals by defeating Standish-Sterling by 126 points in the semifinals and then defeating Bullock Creek 1,287-1,110 in the title match to win the second bowling state championship in the past four years.

18] Beal City baseball turns in record-setting season

The Beal City baseball team etched its name in the MHSAA record books as it averaged a state-record 12.5 runs per game this season. Beal City turned in a 30-3 record this season and reached the Division 4 state championship game for the first time since 2018 before dropping a 4-3 decision to Riverview Gabriel Richard.

19] St. Louis wrestling team turns in big season

The St. Louis wrestling team turned in one of its finest seasons in years. The Sharks defeated Hesperia 54-20 to win the regional title and make its their first trip to the team state finals since 1995. St. Louis then defeated Decatur 53-18 in the quarterfinals before falling to eventual state champion Hudson in the semifinals.



The St. Louis wrestling team qualified for team state and reached the semifinals.

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The DeWitt football team reached the Division 3 state championship game.

**20) Zane Forist breaks records as Carson City track takes second at state**

Senior Zane Forist broke his own state records in both the shot put and the discus as he helped lead Carson City-Crystal to a second-place finish at the Division 4 track and field finals.

**21) DeWitt football team reaches state title game**

After winning its first football state title the season before, the DeWitt football team made a spirited run at defending their title

this season. DeWitt reached the Division 3 state championship game where it dropped a 25-21 thriller to Detroit King. DeWitt wrapped up the season with a 12-2 overall record.

**22) Beal City reaches Division 8 football championship game**

The Beal City football team overcame injuries to go on a thrilling post-season run that ended up in Ford Field playing for the Division 8 state title. While Beal City came up short 14-7 in a defensive struggle, the Aggies had plenty to be proud of including a 12-2 final record and a spot in the state championship game for the second time in the past three years.

**23) New Lothrop wrestling team places second at state finals**

The New Lothrop wrestling team reached the Division 4 state finals where it fell to Hudson. The Hornets finish season with a 23-3 record and returned to the D4 state championship match for the first time since 2018.

**24) Bullock Creek boys bowling team reaches state title match**

The Bullock Creek boys bowling team turned in a big season capped by an appearance in the Division 3 state championship match. Making its first-ever finals appearance, the

Lancers defeated No. 3 seed Jonesville and No. 2 seed Madison Heights Bishop Foley to earn a berth in the finals where it fell to Gladwin.

**25) Midland hockey team goes on post-season run**

The Midland hockey team thrilled its fans by going on a deep post-season run in the Division I hockey state tournament. The Chemics reached the Division 1 state semifinals before falling to eventual state champion Detroit Catholic Central.

**26) Freeland football team reaches state semis for second straight season**

The Freeland football team continued its recent run of success by advancing to the state semifinals for the second consecutive season. Freeland dropped a 30-27 thriller to eventual Division 4 state champion Chelsea in the Division 4 state semifinals.

**27) Grand Ledge gymnasts place second in the state**

The Grand Ledge gymnastics team was back among the elite in the state as it placed second to Rockford in the MHSAA gymnastics state finals. The Comets finished first in both the floor and the vault to secure the second-place finish.

**28) Holt wrestlers carry on legacy of former coach**

With the passing of legendary coach Rocky Shaft during the summer, the Holt wrestling team rallied in his memory to put together a big season. The Rams capped the season with an appearance in the Division 1 state quarterfinals. Holt also won a league title and the first-ever Capital Area Activities Conference (CAAC) Classic and continued their string of team district titles by winning their 35<sup>th</sup> straight district championship to carry on the legacy that coach Shaft built.

**29) Breckenridge girls make first appearance in bowling finals**

In just their third year as a program, the Breckenridge girls bowling team made history with its first-ever appearance in the team state bowling finals. Not only did Breckenridge qualify for the state but they did so with four brand-new bowlers on the team.

**30) Lansing Catholic girls take second at state golf finals**

The Lansing Catholic girls golf team missed out on a state title by the slimmest of margins. The Cougars finished in a tie with Montague but came up short in the tie-breaker at the Division 4 state golf finals. Amanda Melling led the way for the Cougars finished third overall while Sailor Somerville placed fourth individually.

**31) Essexville-Garber softball reaches final four**

The Essexville-Garber softball team won its first regional championship since 1997 and reached the Division 2 state semifinals.

**32) Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heat girls track places second at state**

The Mt Pleasant Sacred Heart girls track placed second at the Division 4 track and field championship.

The DeWitt boys soccer team advanced to the Division 2 state semifinals.

**33) Mason girls reach state bowling finals**

The Mason girls bowling team defeated the third and seventh seeds before falling in the Division 2 bowling state finals.

**34) Mason football reaches state semifinals**

The Mason football team reached the Division 3 state semifinals where it fell to eventual state champion Detroit King.

**35) Pewamo-Westphalia track teams place in top five at state**

The Pewamo-Westphalia girls track team placed second in the state in Division 3 while the P-W boys team finished fourth at the state finals.

**36) DeWitt boys soccer goes on deep post-season run**

The DeWitt boys soccer team reached the Division 2 state semifinals before falling to Birmingham Brother Rice in overtime.

**37) Midland Dow girls basketball reaches elite eight**

The Midland Dow girls basketball team reached the Division 1 state quarterfinals where they fell to eventual state champion Hartland in overtime.

**38) Pewamo-Westphalia boys hoops fall to eventual state champs**

The Pewamo-Westphalia boys basketball team reached the Division 3 state quarterfinals where it fell to eventual state champion Schoolcraft 60-57.

**39) Portland girls basketball falls to state champs in state quterfinals**

The Portland girls basketball team reached the Division 2 state quarterfinals where it fell to eventual state champion Detroit Edison.

**40) St. Johns boys placed third in state at cross country finals**

The St. Johns boys cross-country team placed third in the state in Division 3 led by senior Griffin Armbrustmacher who placed sixth individually.

**41) Okemos girls place third at state meet**

The Okemos girls golf team placed third in the state at the Division 1 state finals led by Allison Cui who finished seventh individually.

**42) Pewamo-Westphalia baseball reaches final four**

The Pewamo-Westphalia baseball team reached the Division 3 state semifinals.

**43) Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart softball reaches state semifinals**

The Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart softball team advanced to the state semifinals in Division 4.

**44) Lakewood-Lake Odessa volleyball advances to final four in state**

The Lakewood-Lake Odessa volleyball team reached the Division 2 state semifinals where it fell to North Branch in four sets.

**45) Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart volleyball advances to state semis**

The Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart volleyball team reached the Division 4 state semifinals where they fell to Indian River Inland Lakes in five sets.

**46) Lansing Catholic boys, girls place in top five at cross-country finals**

The Lansing Catholic boys placed third and the girls finished fourth at the Division 3 cross-country state meet.

**47) East Lansing girls basketball advances to elite eight**

The East Lansing girls basketball team reached the Division 1 state quarterfinals.

**48) Bath boys basketball reaches quarterfinals**

The Bath boys basketball team reached the state quarterfinals in Division 3.

**49) Fulton-Middleton boys reach basketball quarterfinals**

The Fulton-Middleton boys basketball team reached the Division 4 state quarterfinals.

**50) Ithaca boys finish top five in cross country**

The Ithaca boys cross-country team placed fifth at the Division 3 state finals and were led by Espen Lehnst who finished fifth individually.



The Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart softball team reached the Division 4 state semifinals.



The Lansing Christian boys golf team won the Division 4 state title.

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## ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

### Zac Ahern - Male Big School

## Ahern Draws Male Athlete Of The Year Honors

### John Raffel Sports Scene

Quarterback Zac Ahern accomplished some amazing things at Rockford and is the Big School Male Athlete of the Year.

Grandville and Rockford produced overtime thrillers in their last two meetings, including the 2020 district final the Rams won in triple overtime.

But with another district title on the line in 2021, the Rams rode a dominating performance by Ahern to a big 38-7 win.

Ahern scored five times,

rushing for 229 yards on 15 carries and three touchdowns, and he threw two scoring passes to propel Rockford to the 38-7 win.

The Rams defense held Grandville to just 2.9 yards per carry in the game.

The Rams lost 28-27 to Grand Blanc in the Division 1, Region 1 title game.

In 2020, Ahern took Rockford to the state semifinals after a 40-17 win over Saline in the regional title game with Ahern scoring touchdowns.

"The coaches prepared us well," Ahern said. "We know

what we're capable of. The coaches do a great job of getting us ready."

Rockford lost to Davison 27-3 in the state semifinals.

Ahern has committed to Ferris State, the 2021 NCAA Division 2 national champion.

He was regarded as one of the state's top quarterbacks with 3,291 total yards and 50 touchdowns in 12 games for the 2021 season. He ran for 1,500 yards and 32 touchdowns and threw for 1,840 yards and 18 touchdowns. He was an All-Stater who led his team to an 11-1 mark.



Rockford quarterback Zac Ahern. Photo courtesy PREPSMI.COM

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## ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

### Macy Irelan - Female Big School

## Owosso Softball Pitcher Was A Gem

### John Raffel Sports Scene

Macy Irelan has thrown her final pitch for Owosso, and the Trojans are going to miss her a lot.

She led the team to its first state championship last year and finished her career with over 1,100 strikeouts.

She also became the first Trojan to win the Miss Softball award. She is also Sports Scenes' Big School Female Athlete of the Year.

Irelan and Allen Park infielder Madilynn Ramey were named the 2022 Michigan

Miss Softball award winners by the Michigan High School Softball Coaches Association. Two seniors – one pitcher and one position player – are given the award

Irelan will play at Kent State and had a 83-15 record during her career. She finished her career with 1,102 strikeouts and a 1.09 earned run average. Offensively, Irelan hit .457 with 14 homers, 55 doubles and 138 RBIs.

Owosso's coach is JoEllen Smith, who only wishes Irelan could have had a fourth year in 2020 when COVID canceled everything.

"She was just amazing on the mound and an amazing softball player," Smith said. "She was our leading hitter along with being an outstanding pitcher. I can't say enough good things about her. She's also an all-state swimmer."

Smith notes that Irelan's best season was her junior year.

"As a hitter, she has power," Smith said. "She hit nearly .500. As a pitcher, she has several pitches. But sometimes her control is not as good as it should be. But that's what makes her effective."



Macy Irelan is the Sports Scene Big Schools Female Athlete of the Year

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# ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

## Lani Bloom - Female Small School

### Bloom Caps Off Fabulous Running Season

John Raffel  
Sports Scene

Lani Bloom's fabulous running career at Ithaca came to a close at the Division 3 state finals when she took a pair of first places.

She's the Female Small School Athlete of the Year.

"Lani has been a rock," Ithaca coach Daryl Dawe said. "She has not lost a single solo race this year, which included a national championship in the mile at the Nike Indoor Nationals. She won three regional titles in the 800, 1,600 and 3,200 and her 4x800 team of Rachael Sierakowski, Liliana Lehnst, and Karissa Deacons also took a regional title.

Her work ethic is the key to her success. She simply out practices everyone. I think Lani Bloom has improved mentally this year. She still gets nervous before a race but she handles herself really well."

Dawe will have a lot of memories of Bloom's career.

"I will never forget watching her cross the finish line in a state

champ in the 800 and 1,600," Dawe said. "Also getting the cross country monkey off her back was a treasure. I expected Lani to be ready for the state meet. She has a pretty big day and if she performs the way she can good things are going to happen.

"I don't think Lani stops working other than schedule breaks. She will get all of her runs in and work three jobs at times. She is a runner all year with cross country in the fall, indoor in the winter and track in the spring. Lani will be running at Purdue with a full scholarship."

At the state finals, Bloom won the 800 in 2:11.86 and the 1,600 in 4:49.60. Her 4x800 relay team was third in the Nike Outdoor Nationals in 9:47.49 and fourth in the MHSAA Division 3 finals in 9:46.45. She was third at the Nike Outdoor Nationals in 16:59.67.

During the cross country season, Bloom ran 12 races and won 10. She finished second at the other two including at Shepherd where she had a PR of 17:09.3.

Ithaca senior Lani Bloom couldn't have asked for a better final high school state race.

She took the Division 3 state title on Nov. 6 at Michigan International Speedway with a time of 17 minutes 29.69 seconds, which was 30 seconds than the second-place runner.

"It's exactly what I had hoped for," Bloom, who led her team to a ninth-place finish, said. "It went really well for me and went perfectly on my plan. I just followed it and trusted the system, and it worked."

It was 40 degrees at race time compared to 70 degrees a year ago.

"I greatly prefer this year," Bloom said. "I got to wear my arm sleeves, hat, gloves, it was nice. I didn't have to feel hot. I would rather feel cold."

It was a perfect last race as far as Bloom was concerned.

"I'm very excited," she said. "I have never won a cross state title. To finally win it in my last cross race in an Ithaca uniform is awesome."

Confidence was a key, Bloom said.

"Last year, we had some health struggles but we got those sorted out. It was a matter of coming out confident and stronger," she said. "That's what I did and it worked."



Lani Bloom had a big day at the track and field finals.

# ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

## Bryson Huckeby - Male Small School

### Bryson Huckeby A Key Contributor To Magical Seasons For Freeland Sports

Butch Harmon  
Sports Scene

The Freeland football and basketball teams turned in some memorable performances this season and Falcon senior Bryson Huckeby was a key contributor to the success of those teams this year. A three-sport athlete at Freeland, Huckeby is this year's High School Sports Scene Small School Male Athlete of the Year.

In the fall Huckeby played a big role in Freeland advancing to the Division 4 state semifinals for the second consecutive season. Huckeby played quarterback for Freeland and this past season he threw for 1,703 yards and 17 touchdowns while rushing for 616 yards and 11 rushing touchdowns.

Huckeby set a number of career records during his time as Freeland's starting quarterback. Huckeby has

the career record for touchdown passes with 47 and has the career record for wins as a starting quarterback with 32. Huckeby started a total of 40 varsity football games at quarterback during his career at Freeland. During his career at Freeland Huckeby led Freeland to four district finals and three regional finals.

During the winter Huckeby was a key player for the Freeland basketball team that turned in an undefeated record during the regular season. Freeland then won its first regional championship since 1971 in the state tournament and reached the Division 2 state semifinals before falling to eventual state champion Williamston.

Huckeby finished the basketball season earning second-team, all-state honors. Huckeby averaged just under 15 points per game this season and led the Falcons in

rebounds and assists.

Huckeby rounded out the year competing for the Freeland track team in the spring. Huckeby competed in both the shot put and the discus for the Falcons. Huckeby just missed qualifying for the state meet in both events as he placed third at the regional in both the shot put and discus. Huckeby turned in a personal-best put of 48-5 when he placed second in the shot put at the Saginaw County Team Championships. Huckeby turned in a personal-best toss of 142-5 in the discus at the Bay City Western invitational.

A standout in the classroom as well with an almost 4.0 grade-point average, Huckeby will be continuing his athletic and academic career at Anderson College in Indiana where he will play on the school's basketball team next season.



Freeland's Bryson Huckeby.

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# BIG SCHOOL OF THE YEAR

## Williamston High School

### Williamston Athletes Enjoy Productive Year Highlighted By Pair Of State Title Teams

**Butch Harmon Sports Scene**

Williamston High School has produced some outstanding teams in a variety of sports over the years, but few years can compare with what was produced by Williamston athletes this year.

The 2021-22 school year was a special one for Williamston athletes, as the school brought home a pair of team championships along with some other noteworthy accomplishments.

The first state championship of the school year came in the month of March when the Williamston boys basketball team won a state championship for the first time in over 70 years. The Hornets did the job in a big way as they

defeated defending state champion Grand Rapids Catholic Central 68-65 to win the Division 2 state championship giving Williamston its first basketball state title since 1940. Not only did the Hornets win the state title, but they completed a perfect 27-0 season.

The second state title for Williamston came in June when the Hornet girls basketball team broke through to win the Division 3 state championship. The Williamston girls soccer team had a legacy of success that included trips to the state finals in 2008 and 2010 but the Hornets had yet to bring home a state championship trophy. This year the Hornets filled that void as they defeated Hudsonville Unity Christian, the team it lost to in the 2008 and 2010 state finals, by a 3-2 score to win the trophy.

Along with the team state titles, Williamston also had an individual state champion this year in senior wrestler Ryker Johnnecheck. Williamston has been home to some of the best high school wrestlers ever in the state and Johnnecheck added his name to that exclusive club as he closed out an outstanding high school wrestling career in a big way by winning his third consecutive state title. Johnnecheck, who turned in a 38-2 record this year, closed out his four years at Williamston with a 157-12 overall record along with his three state titles.

Along with the state titles, Williamston athletes turned in a number of other impressive performances this past season.

During the fall, the Williamston boys soccer team won a district

championship and reached the regional finals. The Williamston football team compiled a 6-4 record and qualified for the playoffs for the sixth consecutive season. Also in the fall season a pair of Williamston golfers made it to the state finals where freshman Nicole Schafer placed 15th individually and sophomore Ellie Thorburn placed 25th. Schafer actually had a very busy fall for the Hornets as she placed 20th at the girls cross-country finals and helped the Williamston girls place 17th overall as a team at the finals. The Williamston volleyball team also won a district title during the fall.

During the winter, along with the Hornet boys winning a state basketball title the Williamston girls basketball team and the wrestling team both won district crowns.



The Williamston boys basketball team won the first boys basketball state title since 1940.

During the spring, along with the girls soccer team winning a state title, the Williamston boys golf team tied for seventh at the Division 2 state finals led by senior Caleb Bond who finished fifth in the state as an individual while the baseball team won a district championship.



The Williamston girls soccer team won a state championship for the first time in program history.

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# SMALL SCHOOL OF THE YEAR

## Pewamo-Westphalia High School

### Pewamo-Westphalia Athletes Make Strong Runs At State Titles In Multiple Sports

#### David Cook Sports Scene

Pewamo-Westphalia High School has a long and storied athletic tradition and this past school year added even more hardware to the athletic trophy case.

The 2021-22 school year saw Pewamo-Westphalia not only win another team state championship but Pirate athletes came close to winning state titles in several sports.

The Pewamo-Westphalia football team brought home a state title in November when it defeated Lawton 14-10 in the Division 7 state championship game at Ford Field in Detroit. The win capped a perfect 14-0 season for the Pirates who overcame numerous key injuries throughout the season to complete the perfect record. The state championship was the fourth in the past six years for the Pirates who have built one of the premier small-school football programs in the entire state.

The fall season was a productive one for Pewamo-Westphalia athletes. The volleyball team won a district and a regional championship before falling to eventual district 3 state champion Monroe St. Mary in the state

quarterfinals in a four-set match.

Both the boys and the girls cross-country teams turned in strong seasons as both squads qualified for the state finals. The Pewamo-Westphalia girls placed 10th in Division 3 while the Pirate boys finished 22nd at the state meet.

The winter season saw the Pirates turn in some more strong performances. The Pewamo-Westphalia boys basketball team was again one of the premier Division 3 squads in the state. The boys basketball team won district and regional championships. The Pirates then played in a thrilling state quarterfinal game where they dropped a 60-57 decision to Schoolcraft, the eventual state champion.

The Pewamo-Westphalia girls basketball team also turned in a strong season. Along with posting a winning record the girls won a district championship before falling in the regional semifinals.

Pewamo-Westphalia has a winning tradition in the sport of competitive cheer and this year's squad added to that legacy. The competitive cheer team qualified for the state finals and finished sixth in the state at the Division 4 state finals.



The Pewamo-Westphalia football team won a second straight state football championship last fall.

Pirates then defeated Lansing Catholic 12-8 in the Division 3 state quarterfinals before falling to Detroit Edison in the state semifinals at Michigan State University.

Both the boys and girls track teams also turned in big seasons with both teams placing in the top five at the Division 3 state track and field finals. The Pirate girls placed second in the girls state

finals. The girls team was led by sophomore Saige Martin who was an individual state champion in a pair of events. Martin won state titles in both the 100 and the 300 meter hurdles.

The Pewamo-Westphalia boys track team placed fourth overall in Division 4. The boys team produced a state champion as freshman Tryce Tokar won the state title in the pole vault.

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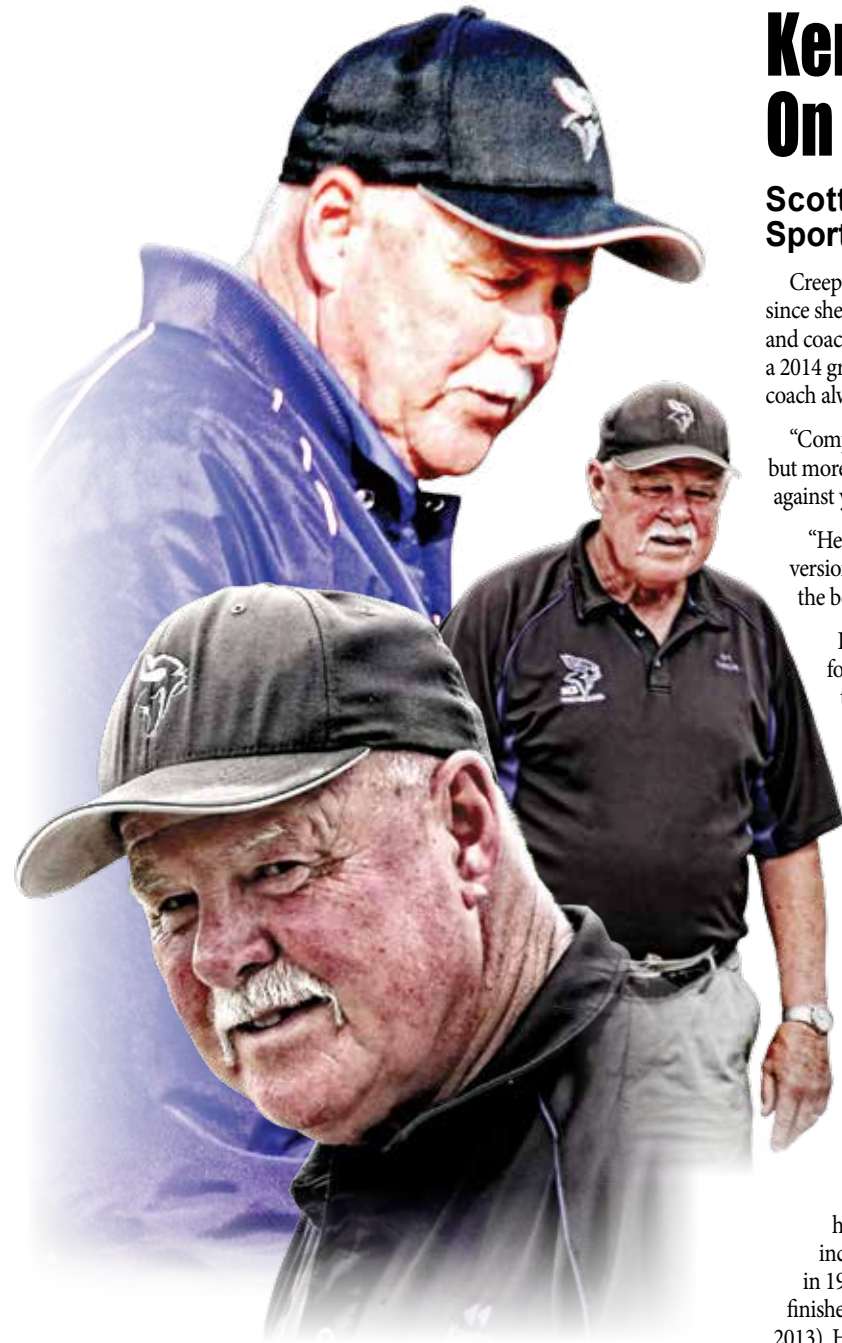
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## Kennelly Leaves Lasting Legacy On Swan Valley Community

### Scott Keyes Sports Scene

Creeping up on nearly a decade since she competed for Swan Valley and coach Tom Kennelly, Sarah Addy, a 2014 graduate said her longtime coach always enforced competition.

"Compete against the other team, but more importantly compete against yourself," Addy said.

"He pushed us to be the best version of ourselves, not just to be the best team on the field."

It's those type of things that former and current players take away from a man that has dedicated his career to bringing out the best in his players

Now after 43 years, Kennelly will have a little more time on his hands next season as he announced earlier this spring he was retiring.

"I'm 73 years old, it was time to step away," Kennelly said. "After 43 years, I wouldn't trade any of it."

The Vikings finished the season 19-15 bringing his career record to 1,228-331, including a state championship in 1986 and four runner up finishes (1994, 2002, 2012 and 2013). He began the season ranked third in coaching wins in Michigan high school softball history.

Now it's time to walk away, even though he will still be involved in the

program in some aspect in the coming seasons.

"The hard part was telling the junior high kids and the younger kids I have been working with the last four or five years that I wouldn't be there next year," Kennelly said.

"Also the fourth graders I have been working with including my grand kids and a former player of mine Sara Ball (Matuzak) has some really good athletes coming up. Those type of things are hard for me."

Emma Bierlein, a 2018 graduate of Swan Valley was one of those players that were taken under TKs wing at an early age.

Bierlein actually did her Senior Project on The Benefit of Youth Sports with Kennelly as her mentor on the project.

"I was one of those players that he started working with from a young age," Bierlein said.

"I started playing softball in fifth grade. TK teaches his young players the basic skills early on so that as they progress, they can continue to build off that firm foundation. I love how TK is old-school. You don't see a lot of people coach the way he does anymore. We ran when we played bad, there were repercussions if you talked back, you sat the next game if you missed practice, etc. There were no participation trophies with TK, you had to earn your spot, but he would work with you to help you get there."

Kennelly played football under veteran Hemlock coach Bob Wallace and later returned to his alma mater after graduating from

Central Michigan in 1971. He started his tenure at Swan Valley in 1972, coaching football until 1989 and girls basketball from 1989 through 2007 compiling a 321-122 record.

But the softball diamond was his passion and working with pitchers made him a household name around the area. Kennelly has sent numerous pitchers onto the next level...six went on to Division 1, six Division 2 and a bunch more to Division 3.

Addy said Kennelly was a motivator.

"Most players would dread hitting on Sunday, but we always enjoyed showing up to have a "fun" practice," Addy said.

His achievements are endless.

TK was inducted into the Michigan High School Coaches Hall of Fame in 1998. In 2012, he was named the Michigan High School Coaches Association Coach of the Year and the National Federation of State High School Coaches Association Coach of the Year.

He was inducted in the Saginaw County Sports Hall of Fame in 2014.

Kennelly still expects to work in Valley pitchers in the off season.

"There are big shoes to fill as his legacy is left unmatched," Addy said

Although TK is retiring from coaching softball, we all know what is going to happen. He retired from coaching football in 1989 but still managed to work his way onto the field - There is no doubt he will do the same at the softball field.

## So Let Me Tell You About My Friend Rob

### Scott Keyes Sports Scene

Rob Ueberroth was my friend.

Death works in strange ways.

In this instance death took one of the good ones. A bad nightmare it seemed.

When I heard about his passing I was shocked.

I was hurt.

I was angry.

Not Rob. How can this happen to one of the most fun-loving, passionate people I ever met.

Just in January I was shooting a wedding and saw Rob and Heather and it was like picking up where we always left off talking about sports, his sons Cody and Tyler, and just about everything else under the sun.

That was Rob for you.

When Sports Scene first hit the newsstands in 2009 he was one of the magazines biggest supporters. He loved the idea of having of having a publication that souly focused on student-athletes knowing he had twins at home and hopefully some day those boys would be featured in Sports Scene.

He was right.

Cody and Tyler have grown into two of the top wrestlers in Mid-Michigan entering their senior year at Swan Valley Valley in the fall.

The boys were his pride and joy for sure.

However, they are just a small part of the lives that "Ubie" has touched through the years.

Ueberroth was loved by so many.

As principal of Chester Miller Elementary the last four years Ueberroth brought change and enthusiasm into a building when it needed it most.

Parents and students loved Ueberroth and everything he stood for.

"As a boss he was amazing and very supportive in anything we did," said Michelle Carpenter a teacher at Chester Miller. "When Rob arrived four years ago he turned our whole building into a team. If you had a new idea he was your biggest cheerleader. He was very appreciative in everything we did."

Before he was named principal at Chester Miller Elementary, Ueberroth worked as a traveling physical education teacher throughout the school district; and as a science teacher, coach and assistant athletics director at Saginaw High School.

Former Saginaw High principal Don Durrett called Ueberroth a miracle worker on the sidelines during the Trojans championship football run in 1999.

"Rob was one of the positive and motivating people I've ever met," Durrett said. "There wasn't many times during his tenure with us that he couldn't get a player ready to play on a Friday night. He always would go that extra mile for the kids."

It wasn't anything new for Ueberroth to come in Saturday morning during film study with pizza in one hand and suggestions and opinions of what he saw from the game

Durrett said he was so appreciative for everything Ueberroth brought to the table.

"Rob was one of the good ones," Durrett said. "He's going to be missed by so many."

Ueberroth graduated from Bay City Central High School in 1990.

In 1999, he earned a bachelor's degree in education and sports training from Saginaw Valley State University. There, he spent three summers as a student trainer for the Detroit Lions, the NFL team that hosted its training camps at the Kochville Township-based

campus during his undergraduate years.

In 2007, he earned a master's degree in public school administration at SVSU, preparing him for his career as a principal.

One of the last things Ueberroth talked to his faculty about the day before his passing was he planned on dying his hair purple if the Chester Millers standardized test scores improved from the previous year.

In honor of his passing the schools faculty have elected to either dye their hair or streak their

hair purple with Ueberroth looking down with all the community support that loved this man.

"Rob was loved by so many," Carpenter said. "We are all going to miss him greatly."

Ueberroth married Heather Eldredge in June 2003 at Our Lady of Czestochowa-St. Stanislaus Church. She works as a teacher for Saginaw Public Schools.

Besides their sons, Tyler and Cody Ueberroth is survived by his parents, Bill and Pat Ueberroth; and two brothers, Jeff and Mike Ueberroth.



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