

# A crazy but successful school year

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Rutland High School's Joe Anderson (22) eludes a tackle following a completed pass during a matchup with Mill River.

File photo by Jon Olender



The cheer team for Rutland High School are in sync as they record a routine for the virtual Vermont State Championship.

File photo by Hannah Diction



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Proctor's Jenna Davine (19) moves the ball towards the goal past the Hazen Union defense during the Division IV girls soccer championship at Applejack Stadium in Manchester last fall.

Rutland High School seniors turned their tassels on Thursday, a symbolic gesture meaning one door has closed and another is soon to be open.

There were plenty of doors opened and many closed in our face over the last nine months in local sports.

The 2020-21 school year was unlike any other. From zoom classes to in-person classes, from masks to no masks, to athletic games with no fans to ones busting at the seams with supporters, we've seen it all this year.

We've certainly come a long way in the span of nine months.

I remember how much uncertainty I felt at the end of last summer. Summer sports had been successful, but school sports were a whole new ballgame.

You were introducing so many more variables into the system and pulling off a successful season was a tall task.

Athletes, coaches, media and fans alike all tuned into Gov. Phil Scott's press conferences hoping for good news and a go-ahead for fall sports.

It happened later than we expected, but when it did, we cherished it.

The Proctor girls soccer team built another addition on their D-IV championship palace. The Green Mountain boys soccer team almost achieved the same success, but fell just short.

Things were different. That was clear.

Football players felt that the most. There was no tackling this year, no offensive gameplans centered around your pass-run ratio.

The 7-on-7, pass-only game did its purpose and kept the football juices pumping. It may not have been what we know and love, but it was something and that was good.

Rutland's five seniors will remember their final game on Alumni Field being one where they could call themselves champions. An 11-on-11 conventional game or not, that feels nice.

The winter season provided us the same anxiousness, a will they won't they push and pull we had felt just a few months before.

There were moments of elation like Rutland girls hockey's massive upset of Spaulding and the Ravens and Mill River cheerleading teams continuing their state dominance.

Others were heartbreaking like the Proctor girls having their title game dashed for a second straight year or their rivals from West Rutland feeling a similar feeling when its whole starting five was taken out by COVID protocols ahead of a semifinal it was favored in.

We were lucky to have a spring season that felt as normal as anything we had since the fall season of 2019.

No delays or interruptions, little, if any, COVID-related situations, things felt right.

Competition was the focus and slowly fading was the talk about what the virus was doing to our world.

Spring sports laid dormant last year because of the virus and they weren't going to let there be a sequel to that movie.

From the first game of the spring season I covered, freezing at Giorgetti Field covering Rutland-Otter Valley baseball, to the final one covering the Division I softball final, there was excitement flowing through the air.

The weather ran the gamut those two days at Castleton's Spartan Field for the softball championship.

Tucked at our media table behind the backstop on the first base line, there were moments where the sun was beating down and I was starving for shade and there were others when it was raining and I was just trying to stay dry.

That was a microcosm for what kind of year it's been in local sports.

There were many rainy moments. Ones where athletes and coaches were searching for answers, when the virus was halting or ripping away what they loved to do.

But more importantly, the sun has shined in the many triumphs athletes had and the fact that they were able to play at all over these past nine months. Their will to compete never wavered, no matter the situation they were in.

Between the players, coaches, athletic directors, administration and parents, among so many more people, nobody ever gave up this year.

That's a success.

This week, Gov. Scott declared that the State of Emergency is over after we hit the desired vaccination threshold set by the state.

It's another sunny moment, sunny moments that are becoming more plentiful as the months go on.

Just like those seniors moving on this month, it's time we do the same.

Between American Legion ball, golf tournaments, local soccer, among much more, there's plenty to look forward to this summer and the beginning of a fully normal school year isn't far off.

Let's open the door to what comes next.