

Section V girls finish atop swimming and diving championships

By [James Johnson Staff writer](#) November 17, 2012

ITHACA

No one would return to their school in Section V as a high school state swimming champion.

The most outstanding swimmer award went to someone outside of their group, too. Yet the Section V swimmers and divers still had some things to show for their work to reach the girls state meet in Ithaca.

At the top of the list, was a point total of 556 for Section V, more than the 447 earned by Section VI and much greater than any other at Ithaca College's \$65.5 million Athletics & Events Center.

When it comes to girls swimming, it is accurate to say that Section V is back on top of the state.

"We haven't won it since 2007," Rush-Henrietta junior Megan Burns said. "It's nice to come together."

There was a period when Section V was all but certain to top the totals of the 10 other sections, the competitors from Catholic High School Athletic Association schools and New York City's Public School Athletic League.

During the five-year span from 2003 to 2007, Section V was No. 1 at four of the state meets. There was an unbroken string of top finishes from 1986 to 1998, one reason why families in search of top high school and club programs would move into the region.

Downstate, near and around Westchester, became the place for the state's top swimmers as a group for a three-year period until being beaten out by Section II or the Albany region last year.

"The biggest difference were our sprinters," said Honeoye Falls-Lima coach and first-year Section V coordinator Norm Schueckler. "We have some of the top sprinters in the state."

"Our freestyle relays scored a wheelbarrow-full of points."

Katie Smith, a freshman on the Pittsford team, was runner-up in the 50-yard freestyle with a personal-best swim of 23.37 seconds. The defending state champion — Clarence junior Dina Rommel — had to produce an All-American performance of her own (23.32) to beat Smith.

"She did really well," Smith said about Rommel. "It's really fun racing her, it was exciting."

"(Pittsford coach Marty Keating) says to just rip one. There is a little disappointment. It's such a short amount of time you think, 'I could've done something' but you know, I gave it my all."

Honeoye Falls-Lima senior Cari Stankaitis was third (23.59), a week after she set the state record at 23.25 during the Section V Class B Championships. Stankaitis, who will swim and study biological sciences at Cornell University, will be listed as the record-holder in next year's state meet program.

"Oh my gosh there were some good girls in that race," the 2009 50 freestyle state champion said. "It's been the toughest race all season."

"This was definitely the toughest out of all of my state meets. The 50 free is such a short race, you never know what's going to happen. You either are on or you are not."

Canandaigua junior Sarah Baxter joined Stankaitis, the runner-up, and Smith near the top step of the awards podium after the 100 freestyle.

Nikayuna senior Kina Zhou, who was named the meet's outstanding swimmer, won the 100 freestyle in a state record time of 50.14. Stankaitis finished in 51.56. Baxter was next at 51.79, then Smith in fourth place at 52.08.

There was a fourth Section V swimmer in that final — Burns, who also was in the 50 freestyle championship race.

Burns, a five-time qualifier for the state meet, and Victor senior Sophie Nothnagle were among the swimmers who helped Section V stack points like pancakes in the freestyle relays.

Pittsford's 200 freestyle relay of junior Stephanie Andrews, senior Olivia Holodnik, eighth-grader Lindsay Stone and Smith set the Section V record in 1:36.67 during its runner-up finish to Clarence.

Clarence, with Rommel in its lineup, set the state record and delivered an All-America time (1:35.75).

The Penfield, Canandaigua and Rush-Henrietta 200 freestyle relays all finished in the top eight. Victor was 17th, and points were awarded down to 20th place.

All of those relays, except for Victor's and Penfield's, were made up mostly of non-seniors.

Pittsford's 400 freestyle relay of Holodnik, Stone, senior Anna Grazulis and Smith came in third behind the crew from Clarence, including Rommel. Rush-Henrietta in 10th, Canandaigua (11th), Victor (12th) and Penfield (13th) also scored points in that race for Section V.