



GEORGE ALBANO

It wasn't 2008, but summer '09 still very good

It would be absolutely unfair to compare this or any other summer to the one we had in 2008.

Think about it. An Olympic bronze medal. A Babe Ruth World Series championship. A first-ever Senior Babe Ruth state title. Three new field dedications.

I can go on, but you get the picture. The Summer of 2008 was indeed something very special. There were four, maybe even five or six summer sports highlights last year, any of which could have qualified as the top story almost any other year.

So for the sake of argument, as local sports fans, let's agree on one thing. Take the Summer of '08, put it on a shelf somewhere, and just leave it alone. There may not be another one like it for quite some time, if ever again.

But that doesn't mean there will be a shortage of very special sports moments in future summers. Quite the contrast. That's just the way it is in a town like Norwalk, where every summer seems to be a highlight reel of noteworthy accomplishments. Just as we had plenty of them before 2008, many great sports stories waiting to happen lie ahead.

In fact, some have already happened the last few months. The summer of 2009 was certainly a very good one in its own right. Okay, maybe not as historic as 2008, but there are definitely some entries on my annual top 10 list of summer sports highlights in Norwalk that would have found their way onto last year's list.

It was a summer filled with great stories from June to August, so much so that a few didn't even make the top 10. As is the case every year, those not making the cut all finished tied for 11th place.

So after some long and intense meetings with my committee of one — me — and laboring for hours into early September, it is with a great sense of local pride that I present my personal top 10 summer sports stories of 2009.

1. Cameron Wilson — Who had a better summer than this 16-year-old golfer from Shorehaven? Absolutely no one. All he did was become the youngest Met Amateur champion in the 107-year history of the tournament, breaking the mark set by Wilton's Tommy McDonagh, another Shorehaven golfer, who was all of 17 when he won it a year ago.

But Wilson's summer got even better as he qualified for the U.S. Amateur Championship in Tulsa, Okla., last week. Once there, he not only made the cut — low 64 out of 312 — but posted a first-round win in match play. He lost in the round of 32, but it took 18 holes before he was finally eliminated 1-up.

And, if you're keeping score at home, Wilson's summer also included winning the Carter Cup, which is the MGA's Junior Stroke Play Championship, and reaching the quarterfinals of the U.S. Junior Amateur.

Incidentally, McDonagh's family recently bought a house in East Norwalk, giving the city and Shorehaven two golfers who qualified for the U.S. Am.

Yes, a nice summer story indeed.

2. Babe Ruth Baseball — The only fault you could pos-

see SUMMER B6

Wait is over for Vick

NEW YORK
By **BARRY WILNER**
Associated Press

Michael Vick got the green light for full reinstatement in the NFL on Thursday when commissioner Roger Goodell said the disgraced quarterback could play later this month instead of waiting until October.

Vick, recently signed by the Philadelphia Eagles, will now be able to play in the Sept. 27 game at home against the Kansas City Chiefs. It would be his first regular-season game since he was sent to prison for his role in operating a dog-fighting ring. The former

Atlanta Falcons star was released from federal custody July 20 after serving 18 months of a 23-month sentence.

Originally, Goodell said he would consider Vick for reinstatement no later than the sixth week of the season — Oct. 18.

"I think he's making real progress," Goodell said at a news conference. "I think he has a better feel for the challenges ahead of him."

"He understands he has very little margin for error, that people are watching him."

Goodell met with Vick earli-

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Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Michael Vick evades New York Jets linebacker Kenwin Cummings during the first quarter of Thursday night's NFL preseason game at Giants Stadium. Vick scored a his first touchdown since the 2006 season in the first quarter.

AP photo



Melanie Oudin returns to Elena Dementieva during the second round of the U.S. Open tennis tournament in New York. The 17-year-old American defeated the world's fourth-ranked player, 5-7, 6-4, 6-3.

AP photo

Georgia teenager shocks No. 4 Dementieva

NEW YORK
By **HOWARD FENDRICH**
Associated Press

It's not quite the case that 17-year-old Melanie Oudin and her family knew for sure she would get this far, this fast.

Not when Melanie was 7, hitting buckets of tennis balls with Grandma Mimi back home in Marietta, Ga. Not a couple of years later, when Melanie and her twin sister began taking lessons together. And certainly not when Melanie lost her first two Grand Slam matches.

Still, there was Oudin at the U.S. Open on Thursday,

U.S. OPEN

ranked all of 70th, dealing with a painful leg and an overwhelming occasion on a supersized stage — and stunning No. 4-seeded Elena Dementieva 5-7, 6-4, 6-3 to reach the third round.

All the while, Oudin sported this word stamped near the heel of her pink-and-yellow sneakers: "BELIEVE." The idea for that bit of inspiration came from her boyfriend, Austin Smith, a 15-year-old who helped Melanie prepare for her Arthur Ashe Stadium debut by practicing together in the 23,763-seat arena at 9:30 a.m. Thursday.

"During the match, I had confidence, and, I mean, I was right there with her the entire time," Oudin said. "She wasn't blowing me off the court. She wasn't hitting winners left and right on me."

Don't, though, get the mistaken idea that Dementieva played poorly or showed the sort of nerves she has in the past. Dementieva played rather well — displaying the stinging groundstrokes that carried her to two Grand Slam finals and an Olympic gold medal — and graciously gave credit to Oudin, who now will face the scrutiny that comes with being the "Next Great American Hope."

After the Williams sisters at

No. 2 and 3, you have to scan all the way down to Oudin to find the next U.S. woman in the WTA rankings.

"It's just the beginning," Dementieva cautioned, "but it looks like she has a good future."

Truth is, Oudin — pronounced "oo-DAN," owing to her father's French ancestry — has a pretty good present, too. This was not, after all, her first such upset at a major tournament: Oudin reached the fourth round at Wimbledon by beating former No. 1 Jelena Jankovic.

"She knows," said Brian de Villiers, Oudin's coach, "that

see TEENAGER B6

Jeter closes in on Iron Horse's hit record

NEW YORK
By **BEN WALKER**
Associated Press

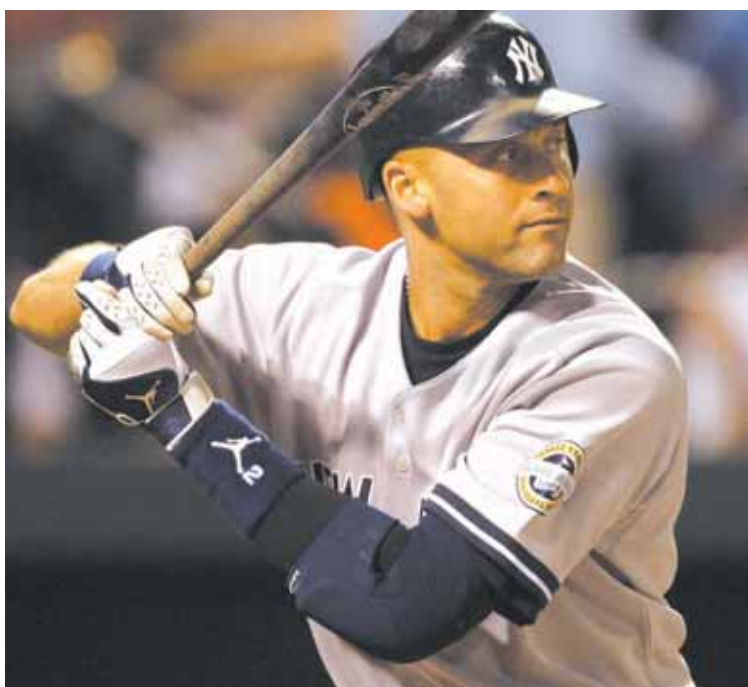
Long before Derek Jeter ever dug into the batter's box at Yankee Stadium, raised his right hand and asked the ump for time to settle his spikes, he gave hints of what might come.

He was just a skinny teen, traveling around the mosquito pits of the South Atlantic League, when the rockets coming off his bat won over gruff, older players who were not eager to accept him.

Though his 1993 Greensboro Hornets lost the championship in Game 7, his hitting made a mark.

"What everyone saw him doing against Curt Schilling in the World Series, he did a long time ago against Jeff Alkire in the Sally League," teammate Mike Buddie recalled.

Now the rookie who called his manager "Mr. Torre" is the



New York Yankees shortstop Derek Jeter awaits a pitch during a game earlier this week. In the next week or so, Jeter should pass Lou Gehrig for the most hits in the history of baseball's most storied team. Jeter is less than 10 hits away from Gehrig's mark of 2,721.

AP photo

longtime captain of the New York Yankees — and poised to set a most major record.

In the next week or so, Jeter should pass Lou Gehrig for the most hits in team history. Showing his mettle at 35, Jeter needed only nine to top the Iron Horse's total of 2,721 going into Thursday night's game at Toronto.

"Couldn't happen to a better guy," praised Hall of Fame pitcher Bob Feller, who served up some of Gehrig's home

runs and calls Jeter a pal.

"I knew Lou, I used to go with him and Babe Ruth to some of those rubber-chicken banquets. That movie they made about Lou, it's the best baseball movie ever made. The way they showed him, it was accurate. They didn't show him smoking a few cigarettes in the dugout tunnel in Cleveland like he did, but that's all right," Feller said.

see JETER B4

Wright, Misch lead Mets over Rockies

DENVER
By **ARNIE STAPLETON**
Associated Press

Pat Misch kept the Colorado Rockies guessing, chasing and cursing.

Misch pitched seven solid innings for his first major league win and David Wright drove in three runs in his second start since coming off the disabled list, leading the New York Mets to an 8-3 win Thursday.

Mets 8
Rockies 3

Catcher Josh Thole also picked up his first big league hit in his first major league start, a single in the second inning, followed by his first stolen base.

"Those are long dreams that are fulfilled before our very eyes," Mets manager Jerry Manuel said. "It's exciting seeing a guy get his first win in a game another guy gets his first hit in his first game."

see WRIGHT B4