

Gallant enjoyed first trip to state meet



By Kevin Gordon

COLUMBUS — Jenna Gallant enjoyed her first trip to the state high school track and field championships.

The Eastwood freshman is hoping it won't be her last appearance in her sport's showcase event.

Gallant threw 8-4¾ in the seated shot put for 14th place at Ohio State University's Jesse Owens Stadium Friday morning.

Gallant, who is Eastwood's first seated athlete, is paralyzed from the mid-thighs down the result of Spina bifida. She competed in track and field for the first time this season.

"I had a lot of fun," Gallant said of the state meet. "I'm glad I made it. This gets me even more motivated for next year. I want to keep getting better."

Streetsboro junior Milena Sobie won the event with a mark of 17-2¼. The 14 state

qualifiers received four throws each during the competition. There are no divisions in the seated events.

Gallant's throws measured 8-½, 8-4¾, 8-1¼ and 8-0.

"My goal was to do my best," Gallant said. "I'm glad I was able to compete."

Gallant enjoyed competing against other seated athletes for the first time. In her eight regular-season meets, she was the only seated thrower.

"It was scary to compete against other people at first, but then I got more motivated," Gallant said. "It was nice to have people to compete against. There were a lot of good throwers here. The competition was good. I liked seeing their techniques."

Gallant also liked seeing and meeting other seated athletes

"It was definitely an eye opener, seeing different people in wheelchairs and seeing how many people there were in wheelchairs," Gallant said.

Gallant qualified for state by meeting the state's automatic qualifying standard of 7 feet, 0 inches. Her qualifying mark for the state meet was 8-6½, thrown April 21 at the Eastwood Relays.



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Because Gallant is Eastwood's first seated athlete, she holds the school record in her event. She threw 8-7 in the team's first meet at home against Oak Harbor March 28 and increased her record to 8-9¼ during another home dual meet April 4 against Genoa and Swanton.

"It's great," Jenna Gallant said of qualifying for state and setting the school record. "That's something I wanted to accomplish." Gallant threw 8-0 or better in seven of her eight regular-season meets.

"The season has gone well for the first time doing it," Jenna Gallant said. "I feel like I've made a lot of progress."

"I thought it was weird at first, throwing a metal ball," Jenna Gallant added. "But, now,

I'm used to it. I like it. It's fun. I like the people who are around it. I appreciate everyone cheering for me."

Jenna Gallant has enjoyed throwing the shot.

"It's easier than I thought, but it's still hard," Gallant said. "It's intimidating and there's a lot to throwing, but I'm learning a lot about throwing and how to improve."

And learning all of the techniques in throwing the shot put hasn't been easy.

"She has a good sense of humor and she listens to me," Eastwood coach Jack Corken said. "When I talk to her about stuff, she pays attention. She wants to do well, and she's willing to try different things. That's helped her improve.

"With a lot of new athletes, it's the transition from one phase of the movements to another that's the hardest," Corken added. "She can get the different phases, but then putting it all together as one movement is sometimes a challenge for her. But she works hard, and she's getting better."

Jenna Gallant said her goal at state was to throw a personal record of 10-0.

"Meeting new people today was great," Gallant said. "It was nice to watch the other throwers, and see their techniques."

Jenna Gallant started throwing at the encouragement of family friend and Bowling Green High School graduate Eric Rine, who won the boys state championship in the seated shot put as a freshman in 2019.

Rine also has Spina bifida.

"It's something to get me out of the house and get involved with people,"





Jenna Gallant said. “It opened me up to a new experience. I like getting out there, doing things.”

The state meet also includes seated races in the 100, 400 and 800. Rine has been encouraging Gallant to compete in those races after participating in all three himself at state.

“I might try those races next year,” Jenna Gallant said.

Jenna Gallant was a junior varsity cheerleader for the school’s football and basketball teams earlier this year, and she’s been selected as a varsity cheerleader in both sports for the 2023-24 season

She’s the daughter of Matt and Mindy Gallant.

“Over the last couple months, we’ve tried to open up and have her experience more things, so we

thought we’d try the shot put,” Mindy Gallant said.

Jenna Gallant also has played sled hockey and tennis.

“We want to show her classmates she can do the same things they can with a few modifications,” Mindy Gallant said. “She’s just not a person in a wheelchair. She’s normal, but in a different way.”

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