

Girls 4x800 relay finishes sixth with 7th-fastest time in school history

By Kevin Gordon

LEXINGTON — Thursday was bittersweet for Eastwood High School's girls 4x800 relay team.

Talia Baum, Leah Emch, Kayden Firsdon and Haley Sponaugle ran the seventh-fastest time in school history, but it still wasn't enough for them to qualify for the state track and field championships.

Their time of 9:57.32 was good for sixth place and a spot on the awards stand at the Division II regional meet at Lexington High School, but only the top four finishers earned automatic berths to the state meet.

The next two fastest times/distances/heights in each event at the regional, regardless of region, also qualified for next week's state meet at Ohio State University's Jesse Owens Stadium.

The at-large qualifiers in the 4x800 had times of 9:45 and 9:46.

"It's hard to break 10 (minutes) and not advance, but it's still a great way to end the season," Baum said. "We're all happy with our time."

The four improved their previous best of 10:00.98 last week when they won a district championship at Oak Harbor. That time was the eighth-fastest in Eagle history.

Thursday's regional clocking marked the first time since the 2021 season the Eagles had broken the 10-minute mark in the 4x800. Huron won the race in 9:24.62, and the fourth-place time was 9:42.21.

"I'm proud of our team," Emch said. "Everyone went out hard for the team and put it all out there. I knew we'd run well, but I wasn't sure what our time would be."

"Our times have been getting lower and lower, so it was about time we broke 10 because we've been knocking on the door," Firsdon said. "That's really a good accomplishment for us."

The Eagles entered the regional with the seventh-fastest time of the 16 qualifiers based on times from the district meets.

"After districts, we knew the 9:50s was a reasonable goal," Sponaugle said.

Firsdon moved Eastwood into sixth place when she passed a runner during the final 200 meters of her second lap. Baum, who ran the first two laps, was boxed in at the start and had to fight her way out of trouble.

"That was very stressful," Baum said. "I had to get out and go as hard as I could for my team and give us a chance at the finish."

"The race was crazy," Sponaugle said. "That was easily the fastest race we've been in all season."

Baum and Firsdon are seniors, while Sponaugle is a junior, and Emch is a sophomore.

"You can't ask for anything more than a season best," said Eastwood assistant coach T.J. Tuttamore, who works with the team's distance runners. "They all ran well, and they've run well all year. I couldn't ask for anything more from them."

The Eagles 4x400 relay team of Baum, sophomore Lilly Mullholand, junior Amelia Ward and sophomore Kyrie Henline had a time of 4:18.16 to finish 12th overall during the semifinals of its event.

The top two finishers in each semifinal and the next four fastest times overall, regardless of heat, advanced to the finals.

Seven Eagles will compete in the regional Saturday — Henline and senior Julia Sabo in the pole vault, senior Olivia Newsome in the discus, junior Z Ramsey in the 1,600 and the 3,200, Sponaugle in the 1,600, Firsdon in the 800, and Emch in the 3,200. The field events start at 11 a.m., followed by the running finals at 12:30 p.m.

LEXINGTON REGIONAL INFORMATION/RESULTS

<https://oh.milesplit.com/meets/550111-ohsaa-division-2-region-6-lexington-2023>

STATE MEET INFORMATION/RESULTS

<https://www.ohsaa.org/Sports-Tournaments/Track-Field/2023-Track-and-Field/2023-State-Tournament-Coverage>