

## Girls' total team effort wins Liberty-Benton Relays



**By Kevin Gordon**

FINDLAY — Cold, cloudy and windy conditions didn't faze or discourage Eastwood High School's girls track and field team Friday night.

Instead, the Eagles embraced and thrived in the less-than-ideal conditions.

They won five events and scored in every event to win the Liberty-Benton Relays.

The Eagles scored 103 points to beat Liberty-Benton with 96 and Liberty Center with 92 in the eight-team meet.

Eastwood complemented its five first-place efforts with four-second finishes, three third-place efforts, and two fifth-place finishes.

The Eagles collected 60 points in the nine running events, and 43 points in the five field events. The top six finishers in each event scored team points.

"It was a total team effort," said Eastwood coach Nikki Sabo, whose team even saw a handful of snow flurries early in the meet and a few patches of clear sky later in the meet.

"Every single person who competed scored points for the team. They just came and competed.

"There was a ton of team spirit, encouraging each other. They're gelling together, from our veterans to our newer athletes. It was really cool to watch them compete."

The Eagles were prepared for Friday's weather following an impressive performance 72 hours earlier during a season-opening win at Oak Harbor in similar conditions.

"We're used to it. We practice in weather like this, so there's no reason to complain or let it affect us," said senior Ava Kiefer, who helped Eastwood win the discus and the shot put. Everyone competed hard, and everyone gave great effort. It was fun to watch."

Eastwood won the meet for the third time, but the first time since 2015. The Eagles also were first in 2005 and second every year from 2011-2014. The meet was canceled because of inclement weather in 2017 and 2018, and COVID in 2020.

## **Field events**

Kiefer, junior Olivia Newsome and freshman Addie Hartman combined to throw 310-7 to win the discus, and Kiefer, Newsome and junior Jay Johnson threw 95-2 to win the shot. The field events were held as relays. Each school entered three athletes in an event, and the combined distance or height determined the team standings.

Kiefer was second individually in the discus with a distance of 122-7, the third-best throw in school history. The only athletes ahead of Kiefer are Eagle assistant coach Whitney Recker, who threw 141-2 as Whitney Hartman in 2004; and Jena Jacoby, who threw 128-6 in 2012.

Newsome threw 107-9 in the discus, while Addie Hartman added a distance of 80-3. Newsome was fourth individually. In the shot, Kiefer threw 38-2½, Newsome threw 30-10½ and Johnson threw 26-1. Kiefer was first individually, with Newsome finishing eighth. "Our throwers were on fire," Sabo said.

Kiefer had two huge personal-record tosses this week. Her PR entering the season was 102-3, but she extended it to 116-8 at Oak Harbor and 122-7 at L-B. Newsome's PR is 119-11, and she threw 107-9 in both meets this week.

"All of us are throwing with confidence," Kiefer said. "It isn't just me and (Newsome). Every thrower is working hard, and we all know we have things to improve on. We're really looking forward to the rest of the season."

The Eagles also tied for first in the pole vault, finished second in the long jump and were third in the high jump.

Junior Julia Sabo, freshman Kyrie Henline and sophomore Joelle Jared combined to clear 24-0 to win the pole vault. Sabo was first individually at 10-0, while Henline finished in a six-way tie for fifth at 7-6. Jared cleared 6-6.

In the long jump, junior Emma Downs, and freshmen Mallory Sandberg and Jordan Jensen had a distance of 41-4½. Downs was third individually in 14-6¾. Sandberg jumped 13-6, and Jensen went 13-3¾.

In the high jump, senior Maisy Stevenson, freshman Lilly Mulholland and sophomore Lila Kiefer cleared 13-6. Stevenson was third individually at 4-10, while Mulholland finished in a five-way tie for seventh at 4-6, and Kiefer cleared 4-2.

## **Running events**

The Eagles won two running events.

The 4x100 shuttle hurdles team of sophomore Reilly Might, senior Aubrey Haas, Sandberg and Jensen won in 1:12.3. The freshmen sprint medley (100-100-200-400) team of Bella Provo, Sandberg, Henline and Mullholand won in 2:06.1.

The Eagles were second in two running events.

The 4x100 team of Might, Sabo, Downs and sophomore Saylor King was second in 53.1.

The 4x200 team of Downs, Sabo, Haas and Might was second in 1:52.8.

Eastwood was third in two running events.

The 4x1,600 team of freshman Leah Emch, sophomores Haley Sponaugle, Z Ramsey, and Cameron Sechkar was third in 23:45.8. The 4x800 team of Stevenson, sophomores Amelia Ward and Ramsey, and junior Kayden Firsdon was third in 10:43.6.

Eastwood had two fifth-place finishes in the running events.

The distance medley (800-400-1,200-1,600) team of Ward, Young, Sponaugle and Emch was fifth in 14:10.4. The 4x100 throwers team of Hartman, junior Mariah Hahn, sophomore Isabella Romero and Johnson was fifth in 1:09.7.

### **Good start**

The Eagles, who are seeking their 21<sup>st</sup> straight conference championship, had a strong start to the season with their performances at Oak Harbor and Liberty-Benton.

“This really sets the tone for the season,” Kiefer said. “We’ve built a lot of confidence, and we feel like we can have a special season. We know we have room to improve and things we need to work on, but this was a good start. We have a lot of confidence, and it’s showing in our performances.”

Eastwood defeated three defending conference champions in the process — Oak Harbor in the Sandusky Bay Conference, Liberty-Benton in the Blanchard Valley Conference, and Liberty Center in the Northwest Ohio Athletic League.

“It’s a nice start to the season,” Nikki Sabo said. “It’s two meets of gaining confidence. The leadership we’re seeing from so many of our kids has been great, and it’s so much fun to watch.”

### **Next**

The Eagles have two meets this week. They host Swanton in a dual meet Tuesday, and compete Friday in the Gold W Invitational at Whitmer.

### **Meet results**

<https://www.baumspage.com/track/liberty-benton/relays/2022/2022%20Results.htm>

