

Girls have great day at state indoor meet



By Kevin Gordon

GENEVA — Eastwood High School's girls track and field team enhanced its already impressive résumé Saturday.

The Eagles broke two school records, ran the third-fastest time in school history in two relays, and Ava Kiefer finished fifth in the weight throw during the Division II-III state indoor track and field meet at SPIRE Institute.

Freshman Leah Emch set the Eastwood record in the 3,200, and the 4x400 relay team of senior Maisy Stevenson, sophomore Avery Bowman, junior Kayden Firsdon and senior Mikayla Hoelter broke the school record.

Two relay teams posted the third-fastest time school history — the 4x800 team of Emch, Bowman, senior Addie Young and sophomore Z Ramsey; and the 4x200 team of juniors Julia Sabo and Emma Downs, Stevenson and Hoelter.

Kiefer finished fifth in the weight throw to earn a place on the awards stand after her event. The top eight finishers in each event are recognized on the awards stand.

“What a great day, and to have someone on the awards stand is really cool,” Eastwood head coach Nikki Sabo said.

The Eagles have three weeks of practice remaining before starting their outdoor season March 29 at Oak Harbor. They've had seven outdoor practices during the last two weeks.

Eastwood qualified for state in nine events, with 11 athletes competing in the meet. The team was represented in five of the six field events and all three relays.

When the Eagles weren't competing, they were busy cheering on their teammates, both boys and girls, at their events.

"This sets us up really well going into the outdoor season," Sabo said. "We have a lot of people coming back and to have an experience like this, it just gives that confidence we belong and we'll be ready to compete.

"That'll carry over to the outdoor season, and it'll filter through to our athletes who are part of our outdoor team who aren't part of our indoor team," Sabo added. "Confidence is contagious."



Kiefer earns podium finish

Kiefer finished fifth in the weight throw with a distance of 43-11, while junior Olivia Newsome was 12th at 37-11.

"I'm really happy with today. I've improved a lot the last two years," said Kiefer, who also finished fifth in the event two years ago. The Eagles didn't compete in the state meet last year because of COVID.

"I was really consistent today," Kiefer said. "I'm happy with that, and felt good overall. I'm really proud of where I placed. Being here before really helped with knowing what the environment would be like, and how things are run. I have a lot of things to improve on, but I'm excited about it. I think I can do really well outdoors."

In the shot put, Kiefer finished 16th

with a throw of 34-³/₄, and Newsome threw 32-6¹/₂ for 22nd place.

Kiefer and Newsome were returning state qualifiers in both events.

Kiefer is Eastwood's record holder in the shot (36-6) and ranks second in the weight throw (44-9). Newsome is fourth in both, 33-1 in the shot and 38-8 in the weight throw.

Emch breaks 3,200 record

Emch easily broke her Eastwood record in the 3,200 with a time of 12:16.50, lowering her mark of 12:26.79 run earlier this season.

“I feel really good about my time,” said Emch, who finished 18th in the race. “I didn’t think I was going to run that time. I thought I’d be around 12:20, but this was a little faster.”

“For her to get a taste of what regional and state competition is like is great,” Sabo said of Emch, who was a state cross country qualifier last fall. “She was very patient during the race and kept her composure throughout the race.”

Now, Emch is looking forward to the outdoor season: “The biggest thing I take out of the indoor season is if you work hard, you’ll get what you want. This has been a really good experience, to compete in this environment and against really good competition. I want to keep improving and run even faster.”



4x400 relay sets school record

The 4x400 team of Stevenson, Bowman, Firsdon and Hoelter also had a giant school record. The four ran a time of 4:25.88 to break the record of 4:36.11 set in 2014 by Maddie Jackson,

Meagan Kaminski, Sarah Bettinger and Hannah Sponaugle.

The record-setting time enabled Eastwood to finish 11th among the 24 qualifiers.

“I’m so proud of our team because we beat our PR by 11 seconds, and now we hold the indoor 4x4 record,” Firsdon said. “This is a really good finish.

“The adrenalin of being at state and competing against these really good teams, is a really good boost for us,” Firsdon added. “The atmosphere is great and you’re hyped to get a PR, so that helps you be excited to be here and run faster. I felt like we were running well. It felt really fast.”

The four knew they had a chance to set the Eastwood record. They entered the day with the second-fastest time in school history, a 4:37.06 clocking earlier this season.

“We hoped we would PR because we only needed one more second to get the school record,” Firsdon said. “When we heard it was an 11-second PR, we were really excited and proud of ourselves.

“We have a good future outdoors this season,” Firsdon added. “We’re already in the 60s with our splits, and we’re getting lower and lower every

time out. The outdoor season, we're looking to improve even more and have even more success."

4x800 relay

The 4x800 team of Emch, Bowman, Young and Ramsey fashioned a big season best time. The quartet had a time of 10:54.20, the third-fastest time in Eastwood history and just the third sub 11-minute time in school history. The team finished 17th in the race.

"The time was really good, especially since this was the first time the four of us have run together," Young said. "We all did really well. Everyone ran what we expected which was great to see. We all knew that time was possible. The race felt really good."

"We did really well," Bowman said. "I'm proud of the way we competed, not knowing what it was going to be like here. This is our first time running on a 300-meter track.

Eastwood's previous meets this season were on 200-meter tracks at the University of Findlay and Bowling Green State University.

"With it being a new experience, we came out and gave it everything we had and had fun," Bowman added. "We knew what we were capable of, so we knew we were capable of putting ourselves in the Top 10."

Three of Eastwood's Top 10 times came this season, and a total of nine different runners ran on those three teams. Eastwood's previous best this season was 11:53.82.

"We really feel good," Young said. "A lot of people have been putting in a bunch of work during the offseason. That's what is going to help us going into the outdoor season and continue the success we've had.

"We have a lot of good distance runners, and we're really competitive," Young added. "It really pushes us to work hard in practice, and that helps everyone improve."

4x200 relay

The 4x200 team of Sabo, Downs, Stevenson and Hoelter had a sizzling time of 1:53.16, third-best in school history. Their previous best of 1:56.31 came earlier this season and was the seventh-fastest in Eastwood history.

Eastwood finished 11th in the race.

"We did really well," Julia Sabo said. "We definitely knew coming in we wanted to place and beat our time. We really improved a lot, so that's good. We knew we could run that time."

The quartet was within striking distance of the school record of 1:50.72 set in 2012, and the second-best time of 1:52.79 posted in 2017.

“I’m really impressed by our time,” Stevenson said. “That’s a big three-second drop, so that’s really good going into the outdoor season to have that time.

“Dropping that much time in a sprint relay is really good, really exciting,” Hoelter said.

The Eagles would have finished with a faster time and placed higher had Hoelter not been bumped out of the way late in the race.

Hoelter was on the inside and battling for the lead in the Eagles’ heat when she was bumped by the runner next to her shortly after the runners exited the final curve. Hoelter lost her stride, but she regained her balance and didn’t fall. The contact immediately resulted in a loud gasp from the large crowd.

The races are run in heats, with the places decided by time, regardless of heat.

“We had a really good time, despite the circumstances,” Downs said. “If that doesn’t happen, we’d have finished even higher and had a better time, but we’re still happy with the time.”

The Eagles quickly adjusted to the 300-meter track.

“It’s a lot more open and not as compact,” Hoelter said of the 300 track. “You have more space, and there’s more room to run.”

“With a 200 track, the curves are so tight,” Downs said. “You’re in a full lean, and the straightaways are so short. The 200 track is just curve to curve to curve to curve, so it slows you down. Your time usually improves on a 300 track.”

All three Eagle relay teams are looking forward to the outdoor season.

“All three relays battled,” Nikki Sabo said. “The races gave them the confidence to know we can run with anyone. That’s a good thing as it sets them up for the rest of the season. This opportunity gives them more experience going into the outdoor season.”



Maisy's clearance over 4-10.

Even more results

Downs had a distance of 15-5 to finish 12th in the long jump. She just missed her PR earlier this season of 15-7, which tied for the fourth-best mark in school history.

Julia Sabo cleared 10-0 to finish 13th in the pole vault.

Stevenson finished in a three-way tie for 14th in the long jump. She cleared 4-10 to match her PR from earlier this season. Stevenson is in a four-way tie for second-place on Eastwood's all-time list.

Complete results of the meet are available at: <https://lightningtiming.com/>

Videos of the races are available at: <https://oh.milesplit.com/meets/462111-oatccc-d23-indoor-state-meet-2022/videos#.YiT4Ud9Oncr>