

Eagles set for state indoor championships

By Kevin Gordon

Eastwood's girls and boys track and field teams are headed to the showcase event of their indoor season Saturday.

The Eagles will compete in the Division II-III state championships at the SPIRE Institute in Geneva.

They qualified 11 individuals and four relay teams for the meet.

The girls qualifiers consisted of senior Ashley Hodulik and sophomore Ava Kiefer in the weight throw and shot put; senior Shelby Getz in the 60 hurdles; freshman Julia Sabo in the pole vault; and the 4x200 relay team of Getz, sophomores Mikayla Hoelter, Maisy Stevenson and Felicia Cassaubon, and Sabo.

Cassaubon injured her hamstring during practice Tuesday and won't run at state. Sabo will take her spot.

The boys individual qualifiers are seniors Logan Wendt in the 60 hurdles and Jaden Rayford in the long jump; junior Mason Steele in the weight throw; seniors Trey Tuttamore, sophomore Jake Limes and freshman Bryce Koprowski-Kistner in the triple jump; and sophomore Emmet Getz in the high jump.

The boys also qualified all three relay teams:

- 4x200 — sophomore Ethan Kwiatkowski, Limes, senior Nate McCauley-Benner and Wendt.
- 4x400 — Limes, McCauley-Benner, senior Montgomery Kramer and junior David Russell.
- 4x800 — senior Luke Coffman, sophomore Cory Jay, Kramer and Russell.

The top 24 athletes in each event qualify for state. The top eight finishers in each event at state are recognized on the awards stand and receive All-Ohio recognition.

Limes, however, will not compete in the triple jump because schools are only allowed to have no more than two athletes in an event and he has chosen to run in the two relays.

"This meet is just more experience," boys head coach Brian Sabo said. "To be in the top 24 is a big deal. Not every school does indoor track and that's cool, but it's still a big deal to qualify for this meet. I love watching our kids compete, and I love watching our kids compete against elite competition. Our goal is the same, to run really hard and compete really hard, and see where we fall."

“To be in a big meet like this, and have an experience that is in a similar format to the (Northern Buckeye Conference) meet and the district meet is something they’ll be able to pull from,” girls head coach Nikki Sabo said. The meet begins with the field events at 9 a.m., followed by the running events at 9:30 a.m.

Live results of the meet will be available at lightningtiming.com, and live video of the meet will be available at <https://oh.milesplit.com>. The video coverage begins at 9:30 a.m.

GIRLS

The Eagles have one of their biggest groups headed to the state indoor meet, having qualified in the four individual events and the one relay.

“It’s a testament to their hard work, but it also gets them excited for the upcoming (outdoor) season that they’re going to be going against some really good competition right away,” Nikki Sabo said. “That will prepare them for the bigger meets that we have at the end of the season. They know they’ve gone against some of these athletes, and it won’t be new. They’re getting that newness out of the way really early on in the season.”

Hodulik and Kiefer are returning to state after finishing fourth and 17th, respectively, last season.

Hodulik ranks second in the state entering the meet with a mark of 48-5, which also stands as the Eastwood record. She began the season as the school-record holder at 41-11, and has twice extended the mark this season. She originally broke the school record last season with a throw of 40-3½.

Her 48-5 mark is fourth in the state this season, regardless of division.

“She definitely wants to contend and go after another big (personal record),” Nikki Sabo said.

Kiefer ranks 11th with a throw of 41-8¼, her PR. She threw 36-3¾ at state last year.

“Her goal is to PR and make the finals,” Nikki Sabo said. “To get three more throws in the finals would be great.”

Kiefer also broke the school record this season in the shot put with a throw of 34-2¼.

In the weight throw, the athletes receive three throws each during the prelims with the top nine distances advancing to the finals. The athletes earn three more throws in the finals in an attempt to improve their distance.

Getz is competing at state for the first time. Her PR of 8.91 earlier this season ranks 14th and is the Eastwood record. The top two finishers in each of the three heats and the next three fastest times overall qualify for the finals.

“To PR and make the finals would be huge for her,” Nikki Sabo said. Julia Sabo broke the Eagle record earlier this season with a vault of 9-8, which ranks 23rd.

“Her goal is to attempt a PR,” Nikki Sabo said.

Eastwood’s best time in the 4x200 is 1:56.79, which ranks 24th. The relays have no preliminaries, only a final with the teams divided into heats.

“Their goal is to PR and win their heat,” Nikki Sabo said.

Nikki Sabo is pleased with her team’s indoor season overall as the Eagles prepare for the outdoor season which begins March 31 with a three-team meet at Clay. The other team in the meet is Bowling Green.

Eastwood is in its second week of official practice for the outdoor season, thanks to a change in Ohio High School Athletic Association rules which moved the start of outdoor practice up two weeks.

The Eagles had athletes in every event during the indoor season. In addition to the four school records, Sabo said all of the athletes had indoor PRs.

“That gives you a jumpstart overall, which is especially important in the field events because you never know what Mother Nature is going to give you,” Nikki Sabo said. “It gives them a sense of competing and that itch to get going on the outdoor season. I feel good about what we’ve accomplished.”

BOYS

The boys also have a large contingent of state qualifiers with the seven individuals and three relay teams.

“It’s a reward for their hard work,” Brian Sabo said. “It allows them some validation for the hard work they’ve put in, the improvement they’ve experienced, that they qualified for state because I’ve put in the hard work. It’s fun. It makes you better. It builds some confidence.”

Wendt ranks 12th in the 60 hurdles (8.71, PR), Rayford is in 18th in the long jump (20-7), Steele is 18th in the weight throw (42-10½, PR), and Getz is tied for 24th in the high jump (5-8, PR).

In the triple jump, Koprowski-Kistner is 11th (37-9¼), Limes is 12th (37-9), Tuttamore is tied for 17th (36-9½). All three marks are PRs.

In the relays, the 4x800 team is 18th (8:54.82), the 4x400 team is 21st (3:50.91) and the 4x200 team is 23rd (1:39.99). All three times are Eastwood’s fastest of the season.

“Our goal is to PR and have a chance to place,” Brian Sabo said.

Because of the travel distance and the meet’s early start time, the Eagles are going to the Geneva area Friday night. They’ll have dinner after they arrive, spend the night at a hotel in Mentor and return home after the meet.

“The cool part of this is we have a lot of new people going to state,” Brian Sabo said. “We’re going to stay overnight. The kids like it. I like spending time with them and the other coaches do, too. It’s just a cool experience.”

Brian Sabo also is pleased with his team’s progress during the indoor season as it prepares for the outdoor season.

“If they were new, they were getting used to the competition and getting some experience,” Brian said. “I’m happy because we had a lot of new people, a lot of young people, trying it for the first time. That’s what excites me.”

The Eagles had many PRs during the indoor season, and some of the PRs were better than the athlete’s previous outdoor bests.

“I’m very happy with where we’re at right now,” Brian Sabo said. “I like where are relays are, I like where our older guys are at. We’ve got a lot of young people, a lot of new people who have come out, that’s what excites me.

“There’s some good leadership. There are some youthful people who want to be good. I’m excited about that. We’ve got a lot of kids out. It’s a great climax for the kids who have come out during the outdoor season, and it’s a great start to the outdoor season.”