

Girls have big day at state indoor meet



Olivia Newsome

By Kevin Gordon

GENEVA — Olivia Newsome fashioned the best throw of her career on her first attempt Friday.

And Leah Emch went out harder and faster than she ever had.

The terrific starts enabled the Eastwood High School track and field athletes to earn All-Ohio finishes during the Division II-III state indoor championships.

Newsome finished fifth in the weight throw and Emch shattered her own school record during a sixth-place finish in the 3,200-meter run at SPIRE Institute.

Those finishes were part of a strong day for the Eagles, who also received season-best times from their 4x800 and 4x200 relay teams, a near season-best time from their 4x400 relay team, and a 10-0 effort from Julia Sabo in the pole vault.

The top eight finishers in each event at the state meet received All-Ohio honors and were honored on the awards stand after their event.

“We saw some things today that will be helpful going into the outdoor season, knowing what people can do,” Eagle head coach Nikki Sabo said. “We lost a big senior class, so it’s interesting to see who is already starting to fill in those spots.

“The times we’re running are on very little training so far. It’s exciting,” Sabo added.

“They got to see some big-time competition in a big-time atmosphere today. That will benefit us as the season goes along.”

The meet was conducted by the Ohio Association of Track and Cross Country Coaches.

Newsome finishes fifth in weight throw

Newsome’s best throw of 43-2½ was the third-best effort in school history. The senior entered the meet already third on Eastwood’s all-time list in the event, but strengthened her hold on the position.

“I’m really happy,” said Newsome, who finished 12th in the event last year with a mark of 37-11. “I’ve been throwing these distances in practice, so I was happy I could do it in a meet. That was good because I was more relaxed the rest of the meet. At these big meets, I tend to get really nervous. Getting the big throw in was really relaxing.”

She was the first thrower in the second flight. The 23 qualifiers were divided into two flights for the preliminaries with the top nine throwers advancing to the finals. The athletes then received three more throws in the finals in an attempt to improve their distance.

Newsome’s previous best this season was 41-6. She also threw 42-11 during the finals.

“It was good to see her get a big PR (personal record) right off the rip, to get off to a good start,” said Eagle assistant coach Tyler McCrory, who works with the team’s throwers. “That helped her relax and be aggressive on the rest of her throws. I thought

she could throw that, based on her practices, but it was good to see her get it in a meet.”

Newsome, who will throw at Hillsdale College next season, was the eighth seed, based on marks during the regular season.

“At a lot of these big meets, I tend to choke,” Newsome said. “Today, I was glad I didn’t. I tried to stay calm and relaxed, and that big throw early made a big difference. I was able to place higher than where I was seeded.”

Newsome is setting her sights on the outdoor season where she was a Division II state qualifier in the discus last year.

“I’m really excited for outdoors because this has been a pretty good indoor season,” Newsome said. “Hopefully, I can carry it over to the outdoor season.”



Leah Emch

Emch places sixth in 3,200

Emch had a monster PR in the 3,200, running a time of 11:16.97 to break her own Eastwood record by 31 seconds. The sophomore’s previous best PR came earlier this season was 11:47.06, the 1th-best of the 24 state qualifiers.

“I felt pretty good,” said Emch, who was 18th in the event last year in 12:16.50. “It was a lot better than I expected. I was expecting like 11:40ish, and I ran 11:16, so I was surprised. I went out a lot faster than I should have, and I a lot faster than I typically do, and I kept going from there.”

Emch was in second place during the early laps of the race won by McDonald senior Megan Hipple in 11:00.44. Emch was 12.52 seconds out of second. Emch ran the first half of the race in 5:29.4, also a

1,600 PR.

“She went after it,” said Eagle assistant coach T.J. Tuttamore, who works with the team’s distance runners. “She’s not afraid to go after it; that’s a key thing. She puts herself out there. She probably surprised herself. She was hurting in the end, but she talked herself through it.

“I didn’t know what to expect, to be honest, but it was way beyond what I expected,” Tuttamore added. “I knew she could PR, but by 31 seconds?”

Emch was an All-Ohio honoree in cross country last fall, helping the Eagles finish 12th in the Division II state meet. She finished 14th individually.

“Being on the awards stand is great, and I did it in cross country, so I knew I was capable of doing it here,” Emch said. “I’m excited for the outdoor season.”

Sophomore teammate Haley Sponaugle finished 19th in 12:24.97.

“It wasn’t a good race,” said Sponaugle, who is second to Emch on Eastwood’s all-time list at 12:19.54. “It’s an honor to qualify for state, so this is a good experience. The pace was fast, and the more races I can run, the better.”

4x800 relay moves up on all-time list

The 4x800 team of Emch, Sponaugle, and juniors Cameron Sechkar and Z Ramsey was 19th in 10:30.10 — beating their previous season best of 10:41.90.

“That was solid, 11 seconds faster than we qualified,” Tuttamore said. “It was a good day.”

“The way (Emch and Sponaugle) finished, we knew we could have a good time,” Ramsey said. “We ran well. It was a great start to the season.”

The time was the second-best in Eastwood history, moving the quartet up from third place. The school record of 10:21.18 was set in 2014.

“We ran a smart race, and we’re really pleased with the time,” Emch said. “We put it all out there on the track. We knew we had a chance to beat that time, but it was still a shock we did it, especially by that much.”

Emch and Sponaugle both ran PR splits, and Sechkar and Ramsey both missed PRs by less than a second.

“It was pretty much what we wanted,” Sponaugle said. “We wanted to be faster than 10:41. That time was a realistic goal. The race went really well.”

Eastwood ran a time of 10:54.20 at last year’s indoor state meet. Emch and Ramsey returned from that team.

“I’m so impressed from last year to now,” Sechkar said. “It’s such a vast improvement. What’s better is everyone’s mood has improved. We’re all happy with our times. I couldn’t be more proud of the team and what we did.”

Ramsey, Sechkar and Sponaugle also competed in the state cross country meet.

“We’ve become better friends, just talking throughout season, working out together more, pushing each other more,” Sechkar said. “We’ve had group chats; that really helps us become closer.”

After the cross country season ended Nov. 5, the four took a week off and then ran a half marathon to start their track preparation. Eastwood’s indoor track season consisted of six practices and three meets.

“We had a good base of training from cross, so it was easy to transition to track after six months of cross,” Sechkar said. “We’re with each other the entire year, so that brings us closer together, and we can push each other more.”

And now the four are looking forward to the outdoor season.

“We’re way ahead of last year, individually and as a group,” Sponaugle said.

“We’re excited about outdoors,” Ramsey said. “We’re going to continue to work hard and improve, so we can run even faster.”

4x200 relay cracks Top 10 again

The 4x200 team of junior Saylor King, sophomore Lilly Mullholand, junior Kyrie Henline and senior Emma Downs finished 19th in 1:55.69 — the sixth-fastest time in Eastwood history.

Sabo, Mullholand, King and Downs had run the 10th-fastest time in Eagle history earlier this season with a 1:57.19 clocking. But after Sabo competed in the pole vault at state, she was unable to run in the 4x200 because of an injured ankle.

“I felt really good about the race, and a two-second PR is really good,” Mullholand said.

“We all went out and put our all out on the track, even though there were a few complications with the handoffs.”

"We all knew we could run that time, and we believe we can go even faster as we work on our handoffs," Downs said.

Eastwood's indoor season consisted of three meets on three 200-meter tracks, although the 4x200 team also competed on a 300-meter track during a meet at the Lincoln Athletic Building in Ypsilanti, Mich.

On a 300-meter track, the runners don't stay in their lanes for their entire leg, and some of the handoffs are like a handoff in the 4x400 relay.

"The handoffs are the biggest adjustment," King said. "It gets a little cramped in there when you're trying to find your teammate. You're almost worried that you're going to run into someone."

Henline replaced Sabo.

"I was prepared because I knew Julia had an injured ankle," Henline said. "I warmed up like I was going to run it, so I was ready."

Henline is finally healthy after two injured-plagued seasons. She had two knee surgeries as a freshman and was still recovering last season.

"She was wonderful," Downs said of Henline. "We're so glad she stepped up for us. She killed it. She passed multiple girls, and ran a really strong leg."

The 4x200 relay also is looking ahead to the outdoor season. Eastwood has had seven practices. The Eagles have two meets the first week of the season, March 28 at home against Oak Harbor and March 31 at the Liberty-Benton Invitational.

"The time was super good," Henline said. "I'm super proud of everyone on the team, a super good time and it shows super good things are ahead in outdoors."

4x400 relay runs well

The 4x400 team of Mullholand, Seckhar, Henline and Ramsey had a time of 4:39.36 for 22nd place. Eastwood's season best was 4:35.62.

"That was a good race," Henline said. "We were close to a PR, and all of us left it all out on the track. We're proud of the way we ran."

Sabo clears 10-0 in pole vault

Sabo finished 20th in the pole vault. After passing at the opening height of 9-0, she cleared both 9-6 and 10-0 on her second attempt, and then missed all three attempts at 10-6, which would have matched her PR.

"It was good for how I feel," Sabo said. "The ankle was a factor towards the end. I felt good at the start and everything was clicking, but then it started to bother me."

Sabo set the school record of 10-6 last season, and cleared the height three times this season. She was competing in the state indoor meet for the third time. She was 13th last season at 10-0 and 20th in 2020 at 9-6. The 2021 state meet was canceled because of COVID.

"I felt good," Sabo said. "I was on a shorter approach, so I was doing smaller things and working on my technique."

Sabo also is a three-time state outdoor qualifier in her event.

"I'll take care of my body and get ready for outdoors," Sabo said. "Having these practices helps me know where I'm at. I definitely feel better than I did last year. Going into outdoors, I feel pretty good. The indoor season is a good start for me."

Results and videos of the meet of the meet are available at:
<https://oh.milesplit.com/results?month=3&year=&level=hs>