

Eagles build confidence, conditioning with indoor workouts



Ashley Hodulik (left – weight throw), Shelby Getz (top right – 60m hurdles), Julia Sabo (bottom right – pole vault) all set new school records this indoor season.

By Kevin Gordon

Eastwood's track and field athletes already are honing their techniques and improving their conditioning.

The Eagles have been hard at work indoors for the spring outdoor season. They have six practices and six meets scheduled during the indoor season, culminating with the state meet Saturday at the SPIRE Institute in Geneva. Official practice for the outdoor season began Feb. 24, two weeks earlier than in the past. The Ohio High School Athletic Association approved the earlier starting date.

The Eagles' first outdoor meet is March 31 at Clay. Eastwood hosts the Northern Buckeye

Conference Championships May 16.

Eastwood meets once a week as a team during the indoor season, which began in early December. The indoor practices are on Sunday afternoons, and the meets are on Saturdays or Sundays.



Ava Kiefer set a new indoor school record in the shot put this season.

"The indoor season gives you confidence for the outdoor season," said Eagle senior Shelby Getz, an outdoor regional finalist in the 100 and 300 hurdles last season.

Getz was seventh in the 100 hurdles and the 300 race at the regional after a conference championship in the 100. She also set the Eastwood indoor record in the 60 hurdles earlier this season, posting a time of 9.89.

"With the hurdles, it's like you have to start over every year and relearn everything," Getz said. "It's easier to go into the outdoor season having practiced everything, and remembering how to do it.

"It's a lot of fun. The outdoor season, there's a lot more pressure. But the indoor season is a lot more like practice."

Getting reacquainted

Eagle athletes say their indoor workouts are their first serious track workouts since end of the indoor season last June, even though many of Eastwood's athletes compete in two and three sports.

"It helps me get in shape for outdoors, gets me ready for the races," Eagle junior distance runner David Russell, a member of Eastwood's winning 4x800 relay team in the NBC Championships last season. "Outdoors are a lot harder, but it helps me get in shape and stay in shape. It also gives you an indication of where you stand and what times you want to reach, what you need to do to reach those times.

"The training for indoor track and the season itself gives you a head start heading into the outdoor season," Russell added. "Absolutely, it helps your confidence. When you run good times indoors, you know you're going to be faster outdoors." Junior Cordelia Howard, a distance runner, agreed: "It definitely gives you a head start on the outdoor season. The success you've had indoors carries over to the outdoor season, both the 1,600 and the 3,200. I'm starting the season in a pretty good spot."

Howard also has posted an indoor personal record in the 3,200 this season. She was fifth in the 3,200 at the NBC meet last season.

The indoor workouts allow for more technique work in the running and the field events, but the work is especially important for the athletes who compete in the field events and the hurdles. Athletes also can try new events during the indoor season.

"It's more opportunities and more reps to throw. It really helps us when we get to the outdoor season because we've had more reps," said senior Ashley Hodulik, who has extended her school record in the weight throw twice this season.

Hodulik's best entering the season was 41-11, but she's extended her mark to 47-10 and most recently 48-5. She ranks second in the state in Division II-III.

"It really helps you get your technique down and gives you more comfort in the ring, getting used to the technique and footwork," Hodulik added. "It gives you a chance to compete, so you're not as nervous when you're competing outdoors. It helps your confidence coming into the outdoor season, and I've been finding confidence through success. I want as many chances as I can have to get my hands on an implement. It'll help going into the outdoor season to have that success."

Hurdlers like Getz and classmate Logan Wendt enjoy the extra work during the indoor season. Wendt won the NBC 110 m hurdles championship as a sophomore and was the runner-up last season.

"I like staying in touch with track during the indoor season because the hurdles are very technical," Wendt said. "If you don't do it for a while, you start to lose touch with it, like any other sport."

The hurdlers use a mix of the meet-sized hurdles and smaller practice-sized hurdles that allow the athletes to work on their technique even more.

The hurdlers also are able to work on their techniques coming out of the starting blocks.

The practices are held in the high school gym.

"It's good practice for the outdoor season," Getz said. "It helps you get in shape, and see what you need to work on. I feel pretty good about where I'm at right now. I've been to more practices than I have been in the past, and it's showing."

The jumpers and pole vaulters can work on their techniques, too.

"It gives you a head start for the year," said Eagle senior pole vaulter Riley Welker, who was sixth in the NBC meet season. "You can come out of the indoor season feeling like I've done this before. It's not foreign, like you didn't do anything for a while. If you start vaulting in December, it gives you a very good head start for the outdoor season."

Eastwood has a pole vault box in the gym, so its vaulters can hone their skills.

"Any time I can compete, I'll be there," Welker said. "You can work on your techniques and make sure you've some things down really good, or you can try new things. Now, we can try to get so many other things. If you get things going now, it's so much easier to get them going and refine them during the outdoor season."

Once the outdoor season begins, the Eagle girls will have approximately 50 athletes on the team and the boys should have about 70.

"The goal is to have some more one-on-one time," Nikki Sabo said of the indoor season. "During the indoor season, I'm one coach with six long jumpers. During the outdoor season, I'll have 20-25 long jumpers. With the personal attention we can give them during indoor season, they can actually serve as demonstrators of different drills once we head outdoors."

Ideal conditions

The indoor practices and meets can help make up for the challenging weather the teams face during the outdoor season, especially in March and April.

“Here in the gym, it’s not raining, it’s 70 degrees and you’re in shorts. You can get quality work done,” boys head coach Brian Sabo said. “It’s hard to get quality work done outdoors when it’s 20 degrees out and the wind is blowing.”

The athletes like the extra one-on-one time with their coaches.

"You can ask a lot more questions because there are fewer of us here, and you get more reps," Getz said.

The indoor season is a benchmark for where an athlete is coming into the start of outdoor practice, and often allows athletes to develop confidence for the outdoor season.

“There’s less pressure in the indoor meets because it’s like a practice, but it’s still fun and you still get the feel of competition,” Getz said. “Every year, I forget what it’s like in terms of the competition, and then when I come back, I realize what the competition is like, and I get competitive really quick.”

The meets

The indoor meets are held at colleges and universities around the state. The schools host the meets as fundraisers and recruiting showcases.

High school teams can travel as far as they want to compete, although Eastwood’s indoor meets are at the University of Findlay and Bowling Green State University. A handful of Eagles also competed in a last chance meet Sunday at the University of Akron.

Indoor track is a club sport at Eastwood. The Ohio High School Athletic Association doesn’t sanction indoor track.

Attendance at Eastwood’s indoor practices and meets isn’t mandatory, Brian Sabo and Nikki Sabo said.

“It’s strictly optional,” Brian Sabo said. “We want them to play other sports. If it’s all right (with their winter sports coach), they’re welcome to come in and get some technique work in with us.”

The top 24 individuals in each event qualify for the state meet, although all 24 may not elect to compete.

Not all schools recognize indoor track, even as a club sport, meaning athletes who compete unattached are ineligible for the state meet. Some athletes decide not to compete at state because of other commitments.

The regular-season indoor meets are held without divisions, but the state meet will have two divisions — Division I and Division II-III. Eastwood’s boys and girls compete in Division II-III during the indoor season, and Division II outdoors.

“Not everyone does indoor track, but you can still get a good idea of the competition for the outdoor season, especially in an event like the hurdles,” Wendt said. “You generally don’t see a whole lot of new hurdlers during the outdoor season. You’re usually facing the same guys you faced during the indoor season. There are always some new guys, but this gives you a pretty good idea of the competition you’ll be facing.”

Team building

The Eagle athletes also enjoy hanging out with their teammates and friends during the indoor season.

The athletes often carpool to the meets.

"Going to the meets together, and the meets are long, so you get a really good chance to get to know guys better," Russell said. "The team bonding is definitely good."

The indoor season also helps the freshmen and other first-year athletes know their teammates better.

"I got to know the distance kids a little bit better when I was a freshman because of indoors," Howard said. "That way you go into it with more experience and a lot more confidence. You know your teammates better, and you have an idea of what the competition is all about."

How it began

Eastwood’s indoor practices have been held since the early 2000s when they were started for the pole vaulters, Brian Sabo said. They eventually expanded to all field events, and the sprints, hurdles and distance events.

“We have such good coaches in terms of technique work, so we feel we can get ahead a little bit and get some conditioning in,” Brian Sabo said. “The practices are volunteer for the coaches, too, but they’re great about getting here.

“It’s organized chaos all over the place, but we get our work done, and the kids and coaches enjoy it,” Brian Sabo added.