

Middle school boys, girls win conference titles again

By Kevin Gordon

TONTOGANY — Eastwood Middle School's boys track and field team won its 22nd straight conference championship and the girls team won its third straight league title Friday night during the Northern Buckeye Conference Championships at Otsego High School.

The boys won six events and scored 152 points to win the eight-team meet. Otsego was second with 96, while Lake was third with 88.5.

The boys' 22 straight conference titles overlap the Suburban Lakes League and the NBC, which started with the 2011-12 academic year. The NBC meet wasn't held in 2020 because of COVID.

The girls won three events and totaled 136 points to finished ahead of runner-up Genoa with 123 and third-place Otsego with 104.

"It's outstanding to carry on the tradition we've established," Eastwood coach John Sponaugle said. "No team wants to be the one that ends the streak. It's a tremendous feeling to win both. The competition seems to be getting stronger and stronger every year, so it's more and more of a challenge every year."

The Eagles steadily improved during the season. which was dominated by rainy, windy and cold weather.

"We worked hard," Sponaugle said. "We had a lot of adversity with the weather. We didn't take a lot of days off. We canceled one practice, I think, and we had a meet or two canceled. But we practiced inside and worked on what we could.

"The kids really stepped up, supported each other and kept the enthusiasm up," Sponaugle added. "In a challenging weather season, that helped a lot."

The Eagles had approximately 50 athletes on each team,

"We want them to enjoy it and embrace it, and have a lot of fun," Sponaugle said. "The idea is to keep that pipeline, that tradition going, and then we see them in high school." The coaches test their athletes early in the season in an effort to determine which events suit them best.

"We have so many kids come out, and many of the seventh graders have never participated in track," Sponaugle said. "We have a system of testing. We find out what their strengths are. Then, through practices and the first few meets, we experiment and see where their strengths fit best, and we sort it all out."

BOYS RECAP

Nate Grigson won both hurdles races and the 200 for Eastwood, and Ben Buehler won the 1,600 and the 800. The Eagles scored in 15 of the 16 events, and had two scorers in nine of the 12 individual events. The top eight finishers in each event scored.

"The boys team, we're fortunate to have a lot of depth," Sponaugle said. "We have a lot of great performers, and we have a lot of depth. Being able to put two solid performers in every event and have them step up and do well, that's what it takes to get the points you need to win a meet like this."

Grigson won the 110 hurdles in 16.64, the 200 hurdles in 27.90 and the 200 in 25.00. Buehler won the 1,600 in 5:16.49 and the 800 in 2:21.58.

The Eagles also won the 4x800 relay where Noah Bryant, Joey Shumski, Casen Henline and Jacob Rhodes finished first in 10:07.65.

GIRLS RECAP

Josie Appelhans won the 100 and the 200 for Eastwood, and Camille Foos won the high jump — all with a conference record performance.

Appelhans won the 100 in 12.98 to break the NBC record of 13.02 set by Lake's Sophie Jackson in 2014 and matched by Eastwood's Jamie Schmeltz in 2016. This time also breaks the 100 m school record that was also held by Jamie Schmeltz. She won the 200 in 26.38, breaking the NBC record of 26.88 set by Rossford's Regan Clay in 2013 and she also breaks her own school record in this event for the third time this season.

Appelhans also was second in the 400 in 1:02.31.

Foos cleared 5-0 to win the high jump and break the NBC record of 4-11 set last year by Elmwood's Selina Deal. This height of 5-0 ties the school record which is currently held by both Katelyn Meyer and Cathy Smithy.

The Eagles scored in all 16 events, and had two scorers in nine of the 12 individual events.

"We knew we'd have our hands full with Otsego and Genoa," Sponaugle said. "We had a lot of girls step up and do well. (Appelhans) had two meet records and (Foos) had a meet record, but we had a lot of people with PRs tonight. It was a team effort.

"All of our relays finished higher than I thought they would," Sponaugle added. "All of our relays performed really well, and we needed that."

The 4x800, 4x100 and 4x400 relays all finished third, and the 4x200 relay finished fourth.

NBC CHAMPIONSHIPS RESULTS

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