

Girls dominant in winning at Napoleon



By Kevin Gordon

NAPOLEON — Eastwood High School's girls track and field team scripted a familiar story Saturday.

The Eagles' latest best-seller again was filled with great results, great effort, great energy, and seemingly a million different contributors.

The Eagles won eight of the 17 events, and added three second-place finishes and two third-place finishes to run away with first place in the seven-team meet.

Eastwood scored 170 points to finish 41 points of runner-up Celina. Wauseon was third with 93, followed by Archbold 89, Bowling Green 84, Napoleon 52 and Defiance 40.

Sophomore Julia Sabo extended her school record to win the pole vault and finished first in the 100, junior Aubrey Haas swept the hurdles, junior Ava Kiefer and sophomore Olivia Newsome won the throws, and the Eagles' 4x800 and 4x100 relay teams also won.

The top eight finishers in each event scored team points. Schools were allowed to enter up to three athletes in the 13 non-relay events and one team in each of the four relay events.

Eastwood finished its dominant performance with 21 personal records and one season best.

"We really did well, in terms of results, and we competed hard," Eastwood head coach Nikki Sabo said. "The girls went after it. It was a day of PRs and in every sector, too. We just keep improving."

Twenty-eight athletes competed for the Eagles, who scored in every event. They had at least two scorers in nine of the 13 non-relay events, including three scorers in the 300 hurdles, discus, high jump and long jump.

"To win the meet and not only score the number of points we did is great, but it was event after event that we kept winning," Haas said. "We had energy across all of the field events and running events, and it's important for us to have that energy."



Photo Credit: Danielle DeFalco

“We build off each other, and we’re happy for each other’s successes, and that’s what is going to take us far in the NBC (Northern Buckeye Conference) and district meets. That’s something you can’t coach,” Haas added. Haas said one of the best examples of the energy came during the 4x400 relay, the final event of the meet. The Eagles finished second with Haas running the anchor leg. During the girls and boys 4x400s, the Eastwood runners are cheered on by teammates, both boys and girls. Saturday, those teammates were positioned just outside the fence on the final curve.

Joining Haas on the relay were junior Mikayla Hoelter, freshman Reilly Might and junior Maisy Stevenson. The team had a time of 4:20.23. Hoelter and Stevenson ran PRs during the relay.

“When you hear everyone cheering for you, you know you’re doing this for the team and not just yourself,” Haas said. “It gives you a reminder of why you’re doing this, you’re doing it for the team, and it’s not about you.”

The Eagles have two meets this week, visiting Woodmore for an NBC tri-meet that includes Rossford; and hosting the Eastwood Relays Friday.

Sabo breaks pole vault record again

Sabo had to wait an extra year for her first opportunity to break the school record in the pole vault. Now, she’s broken the mark twice in nine days after clearing 10-9 to win her specialty at Napoleon.

The sophomore added two inches to her record of 10-7 set April 9 at the Whitmer Invitational. Sabo broke the school record for the first time on her fourth attempt after failing to clear 10-7 in three previous meets when she made 10-0 or 10-1.

“It’s really nice now because PRs are records, and it’s always an awesome feeling to get a PR and knowing it’s the record is even nicer,” said Sabo, who might have set the record a year ago if the season hadn’t been canceled because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Breaking the record the first time took some of the pressure off because now I know it’s all PRs going forward,” Sabo said. “It’s a big relief.”

After vaulting 10-9, Sabo moved the bar to 11-0. She missed all three attempts at the height, but twice cleared the bar with her body before knocking the bar down with her hands.

“She’s doing a great job,” said Eastwood assistant coach Ethan Downey, who works with the vaulters. “She had two great attempts at 11-0. It’s just a matter of time before we clear it.” Sabo finished first in the 100 in 13:45, winning by .03.

Haas sweeps hurdles

Haas won the 100 hurdles in 17.07 and the 300 hurdles in 49.41.

"I'm definitely happy to win, but it wasn't a great day time-wise," Haas said. "I was able to get out and contribute to the team, and that's the most important thing. I like where I'm at right now, especially the 300 hurdles. I just want to keep building on what I've done and keep my focus where it is."

The junior's time in the 100 race was a PR, beating her best of 17.21. She was within striking distance of her PR in the 300 hurdles, a time of 48.41 set March 30 during a dual meet against Oak Harbor. That time was seventh-fastest in school history.

Haas came back to win the 300 hurdles at Whitmer a week ago after hitting the next-to-last hurdle. Despite falling, she still won in 50.68, a time that easily could have been a career best without the mishap.

"She had a nice day," Nikki Sabo said. "When you're a hurdler, there's going to be some falls like she had Whitmer. But they also saw her determination and grit when she got back up and won."

Haas is in only her second full year of hurdling. She didn't run track in middle school and first hurdled as a freshman before last season was wiped out after three weeks of practice.

"Today, she was working on some things technique-wise to prevent that (falling), so she can run faster times," Nikki Sabo said. "In the 100, she dropped a couple of tenths, and you can just tell she's getting more comfortable with three-stepping between hurdles.

"Hurdling is still very new to her," Nikki Sabo added. "She's a very coachable athlete. She's trying to do the things coach Downey is suggesting, and it's paying off."



Throwers have another solid day

Kiefer threw 37-4 to win the shot, while Newsome was seventh at 32-8 to improve her previous best of 30-6½. Newsome won the discus with a throw of 111-4, while senior Hannah Friend was fourth at 104-2 and Kiefer was sixth at 98-9. Friend's throw was a PR, beating her previous mark of 103-2.

"Our shot and discus girls have been lighting it up," Nikki Sabo said. "They have consistently been throwing PRs all season. Today was no exception. They're getting that experience, and they performed very well."

First-place relay teams

The 4x800 team of sophomore Talia Baum, freshman Amelia Ward, senior Jamie Lahey and freshman Avery Bowman won in 10:17.25, beating their previous best this season of 11:01.20. The time was just 13 seconds shy of cracking Eastwood's all-time Top 10. The top five times are all under 10 minutes. All four runners had PRs during the race.

"That was exciting," Nikki Sabo said, adding the sub-11 time was Eastwood's first in several years. "They're

young, and that race is one of our strengths. We have a pool of seven, eight runners for that race who we can interchange and still run times that are very close to what they ran today.” The 4x100 team of Sabo, Downs, Hoelter and Stevenson won in 53.11. Stevenson was running the relay for the first time.

“That was fun,” Nikki Sabo said. “(Stevenson) is so versatile. She can run the 100, all the way up to the 800. Not many people can do that, and that’s not to mention she’s been high jumping really well. We just have to figure out what’s best for her, and what’s best for the team.”

Baum’s PR split in the 4x800 relay by seven seconds was part of a terrific double. Just 20-25 minutes after the relay ended, she ran of a season-best time of 5:48.94 in the 1,600, bettering her best of 5:58.18. She finished fourth in the race.

“She was running with some good competition in the mile (1,600) which brings out the best in her, too,” Nikki Sabo said. “She’s a strong runner, and there’s still a lot left. But to do those two times in that short period of time, that’s pretty big.”

Finishing second

The Eagles had two other second-place finishes — Downs in the 200, 28.15; and Stevenson in the high jump, 4-10.

Downs ran a PR during the prelims of the 200 with a time of 28.07 to lower her previous best of 28.76.

Third-place finishes

Eastwood had two third-place finishes — Hoelter in the long jump, 14-2½; and the 4x200 relay team of freshman Saylor King, freshman Kayla Buehler, Downs and freshman Lila Kiefer, 1:53.85.

Complete results of the meet are available at:

<https://www.baumspage.com/track/napoleon/2021/2021%20Napoleon%20Wildcat%20Invitational%20Final%20Results.pdf>