

Newsome's hard work pays off



All photo credits: Danielle DeFalco

By Kevin Gordon

LUCKEY — Hard work is paying off for Olivia Newsome.

Again. And again. And again. The Eastwood High School senior is less than seven feet shy of tying the school record in the discus.

Newsome threw 134-11 against Rossford April 18 to move even closer to Whitney Recker's school record of 141-2 set in 2004. Recker is the former Whitney Hartman.

Newsome entered the season

fourth on Eastwood's all-time Top 10 and climbed to second with a throw of 131-2 against Oak Harbor March 29.

"I'm really excited for her and what she can accomplish," Recker said. "She should be knocking me off the record. If she doesn't, I'm not doing my job. "That's going to be fun when she breaks the record, just being a part of it," Recker added. "That should be coming soon. It's about time my record was broken. They're big numbers, and it takes a hard-working young lady to come through and break it. She deserves it. It'll come. It's close."

But Newsome's quest to break the Eastwood record and her Top 10 throw aren't the only impressive lines on her resumé.

She's a returning Division II state qualifier, the defending district champion at Oak Harbor and finished second in the Northern Buckeye Conference Championships last season.

"The school record is something I've been looking at ever since I started throwing. It's getting closer and closer," Newsome said. "As I get closer to the record, it's a big motivator for me."

Newsome and Recker hadn't talked about the record much before this season, although they joked about it from time to time. After Newsome's throws of 131-2 and 134-11, the record has become a frequent topic of conversation between the two.

"Coach Recker brings it up like every two seconds now," Newsome said, laughing. "When I throw well, I tell her I'm getting closer to breaking her



record, and she says, ‘I hope you do.’ I know she wants me to break the record, and that’s a great feeling. I hope it happens.” Newsome will throw collegiately at Hillsdale College next season.

“I’m having a lot of fun. I love the people I’m throwing with, and our team is so fun. It’s a really good atmosphere. When we compete against other teams, I know a lot of people on the other teams. It’s fun to see them, and it’s fun to compete

with them.

“The throwers are one big family which makes the atmosphere so much fun,” Newsome added. “When you enjoy what you’re doing, you’re going to have success at it.”

Newsome also broke the school record in the hammer throw April 21 with a distance of 127-0 during the Eastwood Relays. The record had been held by Ava Kiefer, who threw 126-1 in 2021.

A great start

Newsome began the season with a ton of confidence after throwing well during the winter indoor season. She finished third in Division II-III state meet with a throw 34-2½, the third-best distance in school history.

That came after an excellent finish to last season, including a throw of 125-7 for fifth place at the Lexington High School regional. The mark was her personal record until she advanced her PR to 131-2.

Newsome also has thrown well during practice this season, with distances in the area of the school record.

The throw of 131-2 against Oak Harbor completed a solid series in the meet. She threw 130-10 on her first attempt.

“It’s good to see consistency, and it means a big throw is not a one-time freak accident,” Newsome said. “The practice before the Oak Harbor meet, I was throwing distances like that. I’m glad it carried over to the meet.”

Newsome finished 11th in the NBC as a sophomore after her sophomore season was canceled because of COVID.



Season goals

In addition to breaking the school record, Newsome's biggest goals are to return to state and finish high in the conference championships.

"I really want to get back to state since I was there last year," she said.

Newsome said she has extra motivation to return to state where she fouled on all three of her attempts last season.

"I knew last year I could better than I did, so fouling all three throws was upsetting," Newsome said. "My big motivation is to get back to states and do better than I

did last year."

Although Newsome is throwing well, she's still working on fine-tuning her technique.

"I'm still having some of the same struggles I had last year," Newsome said. "It seems to be working well so far. Hopefully, by the end of the season, I can have the stuff mostly fixed."

Mental toughness

Newsome said she's become mentally tougher as a thrower, and that's led to improved performances. The growth came late last season when she opened the conference championships with a PR of 125-4.

"When I'd get to meets, I used to be so nervous and I'd think I'd have to PR every meet or it would be the end of the world," Newsome said. "I've come to realize every day isn't going to be a PR day, and that's OK."

"As long as I'm trying my best each day, and I'm doing well, it's OK," Newsome said. "The PRs will come with time. PRs don't have to come every single meet."

Newsome concentrates now on getting her first throw in, which will give her five more throws in big meets at the end of the season.

During the NBC, district, regional and state meets, the athletes have three throws during the preliminaries, with the top nine distances advancing to the finals for three more throws — or a total of six throws in the meet.



Many of the Eastwood throwers.

Most of the regular season meets don't have prelims or finals, and give each thrower four attempts to decide a winner.

"In my recent meets, my first throw has been my best throw for the most part," Newsome said. "That's really important because once I get the first throw in, I get a lot more relaxed because I know I have a good throw in.

"I've learned to calm down in meets," Newsome added. "I concentrate on what I need to do and how I throw in practice."

"It's her growth as an athlete and as a young woman," Recker said. "She's more mature."

Consistent effort

Newsome is one of the team's hardest workers.

She's usually one of the first to arrive at the throwing practice and usually one of the last to leave.

During one recent practice, Newsome spent 105 minutes working on her discus, shot put and hammer throw skills, and didn't head for home until 5:15 p.m. She's also a regular in the weight room.

"That's kid who wants to get better. That's kid who wants to excel," Recker said.

"She's a hard worker," said Eastwood assistant coach Tyler McCrory, who also works with the throwers. "She's stronger than last year, and working in the weight room with (Andy Friess and Brian Sabo) is paying off.

"She takes to heart what the coaches tell her. She's very coachable," McCrory added. "If you ask her to try something, she'll try it right away. She wants to get better."

Quality leadership

Newsome is one of the Eagle leaders as one of the team's captains. She's one of the team's biggest cheerleaders, visiting every event area during a meet when she's not competing.



“I lead by example and vocally,” Newsome said. “I don’t have to force myself to do either. That’s just who I am. I love cheering my teammates on. Everyone is cool to me, and I love watching everyone, and seeing what they can accomplish.”

“I had the seniors above me, helping with stretches, helping with workouts,” Newsome added. “I learned from them and took on my roles because, as a freshman, I really appreciated that. It’s good to have an older person to look up to.”

But Recker, McCrory and Eastwood head coach Nikki Sabo said one of the biggest contributions Newsome makes as a leader is getting the throwers stretched out and organized at the start of practice.

Recker said junior captain Ian Sibberson does the same for the boys team. Recker and McCrory are non-teachers, making it hard for them to be at the start of practice. The teams usually head out to the stadium around 3:15 p.m. and the throwing workouts start around 3:30 p.m.

Hartman usually arrives around 3:30 p.m. or shortly after that, and McCrory arrives around 4 p.m.

“Her leadership skills are amazing,” Recker said. “The kids under her and the ones who are the same age will follow her. Whatever she says or does, they do. That’s awesome. The kids really look up to her and (Sibberson).”

“She leads by example,” Recker added. “She’s a great thrower. She’s great academically. She’s a great role model on the track and in school. People see how involved she is, and they’ll follow her example.”

Shot put, hammer throw

Newsome also competes in the shot put and the hammer throw. She was third in the NBC in the shot last season and fifth as a sophomore.

Newsome finished 10th in the state hammer throw meet last season. The hammer is not an official Ohio High School Athletic Association event, but an unofficial state meet is still held the day after the official state meet.

Newsome also threw a PR in the shot put against Rossford, posting a distance of 35-3¾. Her previous best was 34-10 last season.



She's closing in on the Top 10 in the shot, too. A throw of 35-7 is needed to qualify.

On Eastwood's Top 10 indoor list, Newsome is third in the weight throw at (43-2 ½) and fourth in the shot (33-1). The weight throw is indoor track's version of the hammer.

Difficult decision

Newsome isn't sure if she'll be able to compete in the state hammer meet this season.

The event is Sunday, June 4 — the same day as Eastwood's graduation. Both are afternoon events.

"I don't want to miss the state hammer meet, and I don't want to miss graduation," Newsome said. "It's too bad they're on the

same day. It's disappointing, but we'll deal with it. Graduation wouldn't be the same if I didn't walk across the stage."

Recker said Sabo suggested going down early Sunday morning to compete in the state hammer. She'd compete before the other competitors, but her throws would be measured, and she'd learn where she finished later in the day. Newsome then would have time to return home in time for graduation. "The atmosphere will be different, but it's better than not going," Newsome said. "We'll see what happens."

Newsome enjoys the hammer, even though it's held at only a handful of regular-season meets.

"We don't practice it every single day like the other events," Newsome said. "The hammer is a lot of fun, and I'd like to work on it more. We've practicing more than we have last year. That'll be really helpful."

Friends or rivals?

Newsome enjoys a friendship with two of her NBC rivals — Elmwood senior Anna Barber and Otsego sophomore Brooke Simon.



Indoor Weight Throw

Barber is the two-time defending conference champion in the discus, and was third in the shot last season. She also advanced to the Division III state meet in the discus, finishing sixth. Barber and Simon also competed in the state indoor meet in March. Barber won the weight throw, while Simon was fifth. “We’re a little trio,” Newsome said. “We’re all friends. We all pull for each other. We all want each other do well. There are no hard feelings during the meets. We’re all happy for each other.” Barber will throw collegiately at Rutgers next season. She and Newsome stay in touch during the season, trading messages several times each week throughout the year. Newsome and Barber have competed against each other since seventh grade. “It’s been a really good friendship to

have,” Newsome said.

Newsome said she’s not as close with Simon, only because they’re two years apart in school.

“I enjoy talking to her, and she’s really nice,” Newsome said. “She’s a really good competitor, too, and all three of us push each other to get better. We’re really close in distances, so it’s really good competition. That pushes us to get better.

“All of the people in our league are good to compete against,” Newsome added. “Nobody gets mad when somebody else does well. We all support each other.”

How it started

Newsome has been throwing since middle school, winning the conference title in the discus as a seventh grader.

“I did track because I wanted to stay in shape for soccer,” said Newsome, who had been playing soccer for eight years when she started middle school. “I loved soccer, but I won the discus, and decided track is the sport I wanted to continue.”

Newsome eventually quit soccer and threw again as an eighth grader.

“I didn’t throw as well in eighth grade, but it was still really fun,” Newsome said. “I had friends doing it in high school then, and I had been practicing with the high schoolers as an eighth grader. It was good because I knew people, so I wasn’t as nervous coming into high school.

“It’s something I’ve always enjoyed and it doesn’t seem like a burden going to practice every day,” Newsome added. “I really enjoy coming to practice every single day. I’ve liked it from the first day I started it. The first couple practices, I knew this was something I could see myself doing for a while.”



Hammer competition

Newsome enjoys track and field because progress can be measured: “I like it because you can see your progress. It’s all numbers. When you have a good day, you know you had a good day. It makes you feel good, and you can bounce back from a bad day.”

Academics and clubs

Newsome, who has a 4.4 grade-point average, will major in exercise science/pre-med and minor in Spanish at Hillsdale. She’s already fluent

in Spanish, a language she’s taken since the eighth grade.

She hopes to pursue a career in sports medicine.

Newsome is secretary of Eastwood’s Key Club and Student Council, and the treasurer of the Future Farmers of America. She’s also a member of One Step Ahead, the International Club and Senior Executive Council.