

Dalton Hesselbart finishes fifth in pole vault

By Kevin Gordon

LEXINGTON — Dalton Hesselbart's season is on hold.

The Eastwood High School sophomore knows for sure he finished fifth in the pole vault during Thursday's first day of the Division II regional track and field meet at Lexington High School.

What Hesselbart doesn't know is if he qualified for the state meet.

The top four finishers in each of the four regionals, and the next two best heights, regardless of regional, advance to the state meet June 4-5 at Pickerington North High School.

Blake Sifferlin of Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary earned one of the at-large berths with a jump of 13-4 at the Austintown Fitch regional.

Hesselbart was one of three vaulters to clear 13-0 for the second at-large berth.

How or if the tie will be broken has to be resolved by the Ohio High School Athletic Association.

If the tie isn't broken, all three vaulters advance to state. If the OHSAA breaks the tie, the final at-large berth will be decided by misses.

The other vaulters to clear 13-0 were Matthew Barr of Meigs in the Chillicothe regional and A.J. Ary of Miami East in the Piqua regional.

"We'll see what happens," said Hesselbart, who attempted a personal record of 13-8 during the regional. His previous best was 13-6 during a dual meet at Elmwood May 4. "If the season does end with this, I'm happy with how I did."

"We're hoping he gets in," Eastwood head coach Brian Sabo said, adding he hopes a decision will come Friday morning.

Hesselbart cleared 11-0 on his first attempt, passed at 11-6, made 12-0 on his second attempt and then cleared 12-4, 12-8 and 13-0 on his first attempt. He missed his first attempt at 13-4 and then moved the bar to 13-8 where he missed both of his attempts to end his competition. Liberty Union senior Jimmy Rhodes won with a height of 15-4, while Belleville Clear Fork junior Ethan Staley was second 14-8, Ontario senior Brennan Strickler was third at 13-8, and Perkins senior Zane Rohrbacker was fourth at 13-4.

"I'm happy with how I did today," Hesselbart said. "If I get to state, that's a bonus. I'm happy with the year, being my first since I didn't have a freshman season because of the (COVID-19) pandemic. This is a great motivator for next year, to get back here, to improve. It gives me confidence just getting here."

Hesselbart vaulted well in the regional after clearing only 12-0 during the Northern Buckeye Conference and district meets the last two weeks. He even broke a pole vaulting during the district meet at Oak Harbor High School.

"The last two weeks have been rough, but today was a lot better," Hesselbart said. "My confidence was a lot better. I've had a lot of mishaps lately. Sometimes you get scared. Today was a lot better than I thought it was going to be, based on the last couple of weeks."

"He brought more energy, more confidence today," said Eagle assistant coach Ethan Downey, who works with the team's vaulters. "He wasn't his normal self the last couple weeks, but he's starting to get that back, and it was good to see him perform the way we did. He was more relaxed and had some energy in the takeoff. It was the Dalton we've seen most of the year."

After Hesselbart opened the season clearing 12-0, he PRd five times and cleared at least 13-0 six times.

“Early on today, he was frazzled watching guys jump over a bungee during run throughs,” Sabo said. “We told him, ‘We didn’t award the top four places for jumping over a bungee. Let’s just come in and clear bars and attempt a PR, and that’s what we did.’”

“I’m really proud of him fighting some demons and competing hard,” Sabo added. “He had a good day. He was frustrated with his practice on Tuesday. We had to calm him down and get back to some basic things, and he jumped really well because of that.”

Eastwood sophomore Bryce Koprowski-Kistner finished 10th in the long jump with a distance of 19-5. He had four PRs this season.

“For Dalton and Bryce, the experience of being here and realizing that you belong here is a valuable lesson,” Sabo said. “Hopefully, they can learn from and build on this experience.”

Eagle senior Mason Steele threw 99-10 for 15th place in the discus. He threw that distance on his first attempt and then fouled on his final two attempts.

“If I’d have said, ‘Mason, early on this year, you’re going to be in the regional, he would have taken it,’” Sabo said. “He went after it today, and they just happened to be fouls. Safe throws aren’t going to get us anywhere. He knew he had to throw big to get out, and he left here knowing he went after it.”

Steele was one of Eastwood’s captains. He had seven PRs this season, six coming in the shot put.

“What an accomplished season for Mason,” Sabo said. “He really worked hard and competed hard, and he was a great leader.”

Eastwood senior Gage Might competes in the shot put Saturday morning at 11.

Complete results of the meet are available at:

<https://www.baumspage.com/track/trevent.php?peventid=1130&table=C>