

## Freshmen boys 4x400 relay posts season-best time at state



**By Kevin Gordon**

GENEVA — Hayden Hoelter, Kevin Lewis, Andre Lewis and Jesse Poiry patiently waited all day to compete.

They made their almost 12-hour wait worthwhile.

The Eastwood High

School freshmen ran a three-second season-best time in the 4x400 relay during the Division II-III state indoor track and field meet at the SPIRE Institute.

Their time of 3:46.57 was faster than Eastwood's previous best this season of 3:49.66 and good for 22nd place. Twenty-four teams competed in the race. The quartet was running together for the first time, although Andre Lewis, Poiry and Hoelter ran the qualifying time of 3:49.66 in the Dave Wottle Open at Bowling Green State University Feb. 20.

Noah Smith, a junior, was the fourth member of the team that day, but was unable to compete at state because he was a member of Eastwood's basketball team which won a district championship Saturday.

"We did really well, considering we were freshmen going up against guys who were older than us," Hoelter said. "We were nervous, but we just tried to go out and compete and run our best."

"The race went pretty well," Kevin Lewis said. "We did better than we expected. We were hoping not to get last, and we didn't."

The team's time was just under 10 seconds shy of a spot on the Eagles' all-time Top 10. The 4x400 relay has long been the signature event of the Eastwood program.

When the race was over, the energetic and smiling quartet was greeted with high fives and congratulations from their boys and girls teammates, who enthusiastically cheered them on from the area outside of turns three and four.

"They did exactly what we wanted them to do," Eastwood head coach Brian Sabo said. "We asked them to go out really hard, 50 to 75 meters, you'll be in the race and just continue to battle. I know you're going to die. It's OK. It's early in the year. You're freshmen. They fought the whole way."

“They fought really hard and angrily competed,” Sabo added. “I’ll take 3:46 all day long with guys who battle like that.”

The marathon day for the foursome began when they and their teammates arrived at the high school around 7:30 a.m. and then left approximately 15 minutes later for the approximate 2½-hour school bus trip to SPIRE. The facility is located 45 miles northeast of downtown Cleveland.

Once at SPIRE, the four checked out the state-of-the-art 750,000 square-foot multi-sport facility, including the spacious track and field arena. They then cheered on their teammates during each of their events.

They also snacked and hydrated during the afternoon and Hoelter even enjoyed two naps before the team ran just after 7 p.m. The 4x400 relay is the final event of the meet.

“We tried to not to think about the race until it was time to go,” Hoelter said.

“We tried to stay positive all day.”

“We wanted to enjoy everything and run our best,” Poiry said. “We knew we had a chance to run that time.”

The facility includes a 300-meter track with an artificial turf infield where the throws were contested.

The pole vault was held outside track at one end, while the high jump, long jump and triple jump were held at the other end of the facility. The facility has a 10-lane straightaway with bleachers lining the straightaway.

The team camps were located in a spacious second-floor lounge at one end, overlooking the track.

“They took it all in, looked at the magnitude of the whole thing, the facility,” Sabo said. “Those guys can excite the rest of the team as well. I know if the older group was here, they’d be excited and proud watching them. I’m excited how they’ll mesh with the whole team and everyone else. They give us a jolt of young energy. Those guys came in and battled.”

The four turn their sights to the outdoor season which begins March 29 at Oak Harbor. The Eagles already have had seven outdoor practices and have three weeks of workouts remaining before their opener.

“It was a great run today,” Andre Lewis said. “We’re pumped. We have some opportunities ahead of us with more improvement.”

“The best thing about this is it’s just the beginning of our high school careers,” Hoelter said. “We’re just freshmen.”

Also for the Eagles, juniors Bryce Koprowski-Kistner and Robby Rothenbuhler had personal bests in the triple jump, and classmate Dalton Hesselbart attempted a PR in the pole vault.



Koprowski-Kistner finished 10<sup>th</sup> in the triple jump with a distance of 38-1, improving his previous best of 37-9¼. He missed a spot in the finals by one place and less than a foot.

Rothenbuhler jumped 35-6, increasing his previous best of 33-1¼. He finished 18<sup>th</sup>.

The top nine distances during the preliminaries advanced to the finals, with the top eight finishers then advancing to the awards stand.

Hesselbart, a junior, cleared 12-6 in the pole vault for 18<sup>th</sup> place. After clearing 12-6, he missed his three attempts at 13-0. His previous best was 12-9.

Senior Nate Heskett fouled on all three

of his attempts in the weight throw.

“A lot of guys got some great experience,” Sabo said. “I love these kids and any time you can spend the day with them is a blessing. To watch them compete and battle, get a PR or attempt a PR, makes it that much more rewarding.”

Complete results of the meet are available at: <https://lightningtiming.com/>

Videos of the races are available at: <https://oh.milesplit.com/meets/462111-oatccc-d23-indoor-state-meet-2022/videos#.YiT4Ud9Onrc>

