

4x400 victory clinches boys championship at Liberty-Benton Relays



By Kevin Gordon

FINDLAY — Eastwood High School's boys track and field team was in a close battle with Whitmer for first place entering the final few events of the Liberty-Benton Relays Friday night.

The Eagles' 4x400 team made sure the Eastwood went home with the championship trophy.

Senior Jake Limes, sophomores Noah Haar and Caleb Souder, and junior Noah Smith won the 4x400 in 3:38.7 to clinch the team championship for the Eagles.

Eastwood won five events and finished second in five more events, totaling 101 points to win the eight-team meet.

The Eagles scored in 13 of the 14 events, adding one third-place finish, one fourth-place finish and one sixth-place finish. The top six finishers in each event scored team points. Van Buren was third with 58.

Eastwood scored 59 points in the nine running events and 42 points in the five field events.

The Eagles have won the meet every year since 2006 after finishing second in 2004 and 2005. The meet was canceled because of inclement weather in 2017 and 2018, and COVID in 2020.

"My teammates gave me a chance to get the lead," Smith said. "I just wanted a chance to go win it. We knew what the race meant. That's really cool we were able to do that. It's really big to win this meet."

The 4x400 was the final event of the meet.

"That was a great run," Sabo said. "I told them I don't care what happens, I want you to give the effort like you want to win, like you're going after it. I don't mind losing, but I want

to see you go after it. It took a little bit, but they pulled it out and pulled it out fairly easily in the end. That's how you close out a meet."

Smith passed Whitmer's runner for third place coming out of the second curve on the final lap. He took the lead by passing two more runners near the end of the backstretch.

Smith had no trouble holding the lead and won by 1.2 seconds over Van Buren, 1.7 seconds over Liberty-Benton and 2.1 seconds over Whitmer.

"We knew we had to get out fast," Smith said. "I knew I had to go after it and make my move. I got the lead on the backstretch and from there, it was fun to the finish. I wasn't going to give up the lead."

Field events

The Eagle field events had a big night, winning the high jump and long jump, finishing second in the shot put and the pole vault, and placing third in the discus.

"Those points were huge and the performances were huge," Sabo said. "People were either getting (personal records) or attempting PRs in a lot of the field events."

The high jump team of senior Jacob Meyer, and freshmen Dayquan Oliver and Andre Lewis won with a combined height of 17-0. Each school entered three athletes in the field events, and the combined distance or height determined the team standings.

Meyer was first individually in the high jump at 6-2, while Oliver was in a three-way tie for fourth at 5-6, and Lewis finished in seven-way tie for seventh at 5-4. Meyer's height is tied for sixth on Eastwood's top ten list.

The long jump team of Oliver, junior Bryce Koprowski-Kistner and freshman Kevin Lewis won with a distance of 56-0³/₄. Oliver was fourth individually at 18-11 one inch ahead of Koprowski-Kistner, who was fifth. Lewis jumped 18-3³/₄.

The shot team of seniors Nate Heskett and Emmet Getz, and sophomore Braden Bowdle was second with a distance of 123-7¹/₂. Heskett was third individually at 44-3, while Getz was seventh at 40-10, and Bowdle tied for 10th at 38-6¹/₂.

The pole vault team of junior Dalton Hesselbart, freshman Hayden Hoelter and sophomore Eli Good cleared 32-10 to finish second. Hesselbart was second individually at 13-0, while Hoelter finished in a three-way tie for ninth at 10-0. Good cleared 9-0

The discus team of Bowdle, Getz and sophomore Elden Slack was third with a distance of 101-7. Bowdle was sixth individually at 120-10, while Getz was seventh at 117-10, and Slack threw 101-7.

Running events

The Eagles won two other running events.

The 4x800 team of seniors Cory Jay, Devin Good and Xander Ramsey, and Hoelter won in 8:49.1. The freshmen sprint medley (100-100-200-400) team of Jesse Poiry, Kevin Lewis, Andre Lewis and Oliver won in 1:44.1.

Eastwood had three second-place finishes.

The 4x110 shuttle hurdles team of Smith, Andre Lewis, Poiry and senior Andon Mason was second in 1:06.1. The 4x200 team of Haar, sophomore Kaiden Sanchez, Smith and Limes was second in 1:34.2. The 4x100 throwers team of sophomore Jordan Kieper, Getz, Bowdle and senior Gavin DeWese was second in 52.4.

The 4x100 team of Koprowski-Kistner, Limes, Sanchez and Souder was fourth in 45.8.

The 4x1,600 team of junior Ian Sander, and freshman A.J. O'Brien, John Stewart and Connor Schramm was sixth in 22:48.5.



Overall

The meet championship was the perfect end to a quality week for the Eagles, who performed well Tuesday in a dual-meet victory over defending Sandusky Bay Conference champion Oak Harbor.

“We were looking for a PR mindset or a mentality of I’m going to try to PR, give that kind of effort. Just pour in and see what happens,” Sabo said of Friday’s meet. “They gave great effort. They just kept swinging, every event, every race. They just kept coming. We had PRs all over the place. They gave effort, and that’s when good things happen.”

Eastwood also overcame cold, cloudy and windy conditions in both meets.

“The effort from everyone was great,” Sabo said. “It wasn’t great weather most of the night. People were cheering for each other all night. The energy was awesome. It was a fun meet. When it’s this cold out, and people are going out and PRing, that’s not a normal thing to do is this type of weather. Everyone just gave a ton of effort.”

“We practice in this kind of weather. We embrace it,” Smith said. “Everyone else will be complaining, and that gives us an advantage. We have a positive mind-set and we take advantage of that.”

Even though the Eagles performed well at Oak Harbor, they were even better at Liberty-Benton.

Oak Harbor and Liberty-Benton are defending conference champions — OH in the Sandusky Bay Conference and L-B in the Blanchard Valley Conference.

“Coach Seifert (assistant coach Cody) said this is not the same team we saw three days ago. He’s dead on,” Sabo said. “The first week was just effort, and we beat a number of quality teams.”

The Eagles are excited about the rest of the season. They have two meets this week. Eastwood hosts Swanton in a dual meet Tuesday, and competes in the Gold W Invitational at Whitmer Friday. Whitmer also hosts a freshmen meet Thursday.

“We have so much more experience this year,” Smith said. “We were really young last year. Everyone knows a little bit more of what their role is. Everyone is performing incredibly well.”

“This week gives us confidence,” Smith added. “It’s no longer nervousness. It’s excitement. We know we can go out and win a meet. We just know what to expect, how to warmup, so we’re prepared to run to our potential.”

Sabo likes the mix of athletes and the team spirit the Eagles are developing. When the Eagle boys and girls aren’t competing at an event, they’re cheering on their teammates in those events.

“It’s a good dynamic of kids. They make it fun,” Sabo said. “It’s extra special when they win.”

Meet results

<https://www.baumspage.com/track/liberty-benton/relays/2022/2022%20Results.htm>