

Lauer, Shank, 4x800 qualify for boys state meet



By Kevin Gordon

MARION — Hunter Lauer fouled on his first throw in the discus during the Division IV regional track and field championships Wednesday at Harding Stadium.

The Eastwood High School senior wasn't fazed. Instead, he came back to win the event with a throw 165-4 and qualify for the state meet at Ohio State University's Jesse Owens Stadium.

The top five finishers in each event at the regional advanced to the state championships June 4-5 (Thursday-Friday) at Ohio State University's Jesse Owens Stadium.

The state championships also will include three at-large qualifiers in each event. Those spots will go to the next three finishers with the best height/time/distance, regardless of region. The other regionals are at Austintown Fitch and Chillicothe Southeastern.

Lauer was one of three state qualifiers for the Eagles, joining Cullen Shank, who was fourth in the pole vault with a season-best jump; and the 4x800 relay team of Ben Buehler, Austin Miller, Henry Howard and Casen Henline earned an at-large berth after finishing sixth in a season-best time and the ninth-best time in school history.

Miller qualified for the finals of the 400, and Eastwood's 4x100, 4x200 and 4x400 relay teams all advanced to the finals. The 4x100 and 4x400 teams both ran season-best times. The regional concludes Friday with the final 12 events.

"It was darn near a perfect night," Eastwood head coach Brian Sabo said. "We talked about this being a more important day than the finals. If you don't make the finals, you're out. We had three state qualifiers, and the other events put themselves in a great position to get out.

"We've looked at the other regions," Sabo added. "Top five is what they're shooting for, but if they run a really good time, they'll have a chance for an at-large berth. Guys went after it, and I think they'll be even more excited now that they think they can do even better. When you give yourselves an opportunity, that's all we can ask. They went out and did it."

Eastwood is second with 18 points in the team standings after five events. Margareta leads with 23, followed by the Eagles and Mount Gilead with 15. The top eight finishers in each event at the district scored team points. The points were awarded on a 10-8-6-5-4-3-2-1 basis.

Lauer wins discus

Lauer earned his regional championship with his distance of 165-4 on the first throw of the finals. The senior was in fourth place after the preliminaries with a throw of 159-10 on his second attempt.

The 15 qualifiers each received three throws during the preliminaries, with the top nine distances advancing to the finals. The finalists then received three more throws in an attempt to improve their distance.

"It's great to qualify for state, and it's great to throw well in a big meet," Lauer said. "I've been throwing well in practice and I've been really consistent all season, so I was confident I would throw well today."

Lauer was seeded fourth in the regional with his district throw of 169-1 and ranks sixth in the state with his personal record earlier this season of 171-6 — the fourth-best throw in school history.

"I didn't have to do anything special," Lauer said. "I had to come in and be smooth and do what I had to do. It was great competition and it will be great competition at state."

"If you had told him 165 would win, I don't think he would have believed it. Maybe it was little bit of the facility that threw everyone off," Sabo said of the Harding Stadium throwing ring, which had a huge crack in the concrete going through the middle of it.

"Everybody was down distance-wise, and he was the best of that whole group," Sabo added. "He did what he needed to do. He's been super consistent. The hard part is done and now you just have to knock out a throw, make finals and place at state. That's what he should be doing. To win and be a regional champion is fantastic."

Lauer won by only six inches over Margaretta sophomore Jace Berg, and nine inches over Liberty Center senior Hunter Spangler and Collins Western Reserve senior Hayden Keith. Lauer believes the top four throwers in the regional have a strong chance to be in the top four at state.

After the foul on his first attempt, Lauer threw 159-10 to clinch a spot in the finals. His third throw was 145-1, and his last two throws in the finals went 158-5 and 145-2.

"He struggled a bit at the start of the prelims with his first few throws," Eastwood assistant coach Tyler McCrory said. "But his mindset allows him to overcome an early foul. He came back and attacked it. He wasn't afraid to fail, attacking the challenge of the regional and competing against some really good guys."

Lauer is headed to state the second time after finishing fourth in the weight throw at the Division III indoor meet earlier this year.

"For the conditions we had, he threw very well," Eagle assistant coach Colton Ickes said. "If we were at any other location, I think it would have been a PR."

Lauer has been throwing since he was a seventh grader, winning a middle school state championship in the shot put as an eighth grader.

But he also was a successful baseball player, playing first base and pitching for the Michigan-based Motor City Hit Dogs, a long-time successful travel program. He chose track and field over baseball, once he reached high school.

"I was pretty decent at it, and I enjoyed it," Lauer said of baseball. "I had played it all my life, and then track came along, and I enjoyed that, too. After my seventh and eighth grade years, I had to make a decision and it was a hard decision. I chose track and I'm glad I chose track."

"I wasn't burned out on baseball, but I was ready for something new and I decided to keep going with track," Lauer added. "I loved it from the start. My freshman year was amazing. The coaches and teammates were one big family; that made me love it even more and I wanted to stick with it. I threw pretty well in middle school. My discus wasn't so good, but I've progressed."

Lauer will attempt to qualify for state Saturday in the shot put where he's seeded fifth and ranks eighth in the state.



Shank earns state berth with 4th-place finish

Shank qualified for state in his fourth attempt, clearing a season best 13-8 to beat his previous season best of 13-6. He was competing in the regional for the fourth time after finishing eighth as a junior, fifth as a sophomore and 13th as a freshman.

"I'm really excited. It's a great environment at state," said Shank, who watched the state meet as a sophomore when it was held at Dayton's Welcome Stadium. "I

knew I had what it takes to qualify for state. I had to put it all together, and I did that today. "I battled and did what I needed to," Shank added. "I got on my biggest pole ever on my last attempt. I jumped on it one time at district. I put the timing all together."

Shank cleared the opening height of 12-0 on his second attempt, 12-6 on his first attempt, 13-0 on his second attempt and 13-4 and 13-8 on his first attempt. He then missed all three attempts at 14-0.

Ashland Crestview senior Liam Kuhn and Mount Gilead junior Kasen Wallace finished first and second, respectively. They both cleared 14-8, but Kuhn had fewer misses. East Knox junior Weston Bostic was third at 14-0.

"I had a really good day," Shank said. "After my first bar and even in warmups, I knew it was going to be a good day. I had really good attempts at (14-0) I'm looking forward to having another week of vaulting. Having those good attempts at 14-0 gives me confidence I can make it next week. If I can put things all together next week, I can clear 14-0."

Shank's PR of 14-1 came during his sophomore season and it remains the sixth-best vault in Eastwood history. His 13-8 jump matches his regional best, that also coming when he was a sophomore.

"He's fought a lot of demons the last couple of years," Sabo said. "He battled a really good field, Most of the best jumpers in the state are in our region. He finished fourth to make sure he didn't have to worry about an at-large berth. He came in with a great mindset, a great attitude. He thinks he can clear 14-0 and place at state."

Also in the pole vault, Eastwood sophomore Dylan Perkins didn't clear the opening height of 12-0. Perkins' PR came in the first meet of the season when he cleared 13-0.

"Coming in that height (12-0), just a foot below your PR, is tough, but I loved the season he had," Shank said of Perkins. "Coming in that height rattled me as a freshman. He still had a great season."

After clearing 13-0 at the Liberty-Benton Relays, Perkins missed three weeks with an injury. Once healthy, he later cleared 12-0 to win the Eastwood Junior Varsity Invitational, 11-0 to finish fourth in the Northern Buckeye Conference meet and 12-0 to finish fourth in the district meet.

“I want him to remember the environment and know he belongs here,” Shank said. “He’s been to a regional meet now, so he knows the environment and what the competition is like. He should be here and deserves to be here. This was a great learning experience for him.”

Shank also was excited about the future of sophomore teammate Everett Ward, who jumped 12-0 at the Eastwood Relays.

“(Perkins and Ward) both have a great year ahead of them,” Shank said.



4x800 relay advances with at-large berth

The 4x800 relay team of junior Ben Buehler, Miller, senior Henry Howard and junior Casen Henline finished sixth in 8:09.68 — more than shattering their previous best of 8:27.88. The time earned the quartet one of the three at-large berths to state. All three at-large berths went to teams from the Marion regional.

Liberty-Benton won in 8:01.74, followed by Tinora 8:01.90, Huron 8:05.40, Mount Gilead 8:07.34, Archbold

8:09.99 and Eastwood.

“Qualifying for state is great,” Buehler said. “We’re all very excited. We knew it was there. We went out and did it. It was a good race for all of us. We’ve chased it for three years and it finally happened. We’re more confident than we ever were before, knowing it was there and it should be there. It wasn’t we might or maybe. Our mindset was we were making it.”

All four ran PRs. Howard was timed in 2:00.5 to beat his best of 2:01.1, Buehler ran 2:02.1 to beat his best of 2:02.4, Henline ran 2:04.9 to beat his best of 2:07.3 and Miller ran 2:01.9 to beat his best by a second.

“We wanted to see how far the three of us could get out ahead and we wanted (Henline) to rip that first 400 and there would be no way five people are catching us,” Buehler said. “It went exactly to plan. (Henline) ran really strong. That was huge. There’s still more in the tank. We all have a couple more seconds we can drop.”

“I’m really pleased with how all four of us did,” Henline said, “We’re peaking at the right time. We brought it when we needed to. We prepared really well because we knew the stakes were high. We knew we had to give it all we had in order to make it to state.”

The Eagles put their PRs on the board in the locker room Wednesday and saw they added up to 8:11 — a time that would put them in the thick of a bid for a state berth. They were seeded sixth in the regional.

“That’s the best they’ve run all year,” Eastwood assistant coach T.J. Tuttamore said. “They’ve been trying to get there for three years, and they finished it off today. They had a plan going in and they executed it. It was a matter of putting it together, but it’s hard in relays to get all four to run their best time on the same time.”

Buehler, Howard and Miller were at the regional for the third time after finishing ninth last season in 8:18.47 and 15th in 2024 in 8:34.88.

The Eagles also earned a spot on the school's Top 10 list, the first addition to the list in the event since 2018.

"That was a fantastic race for them," Sabo said. "I'm shocked because I thought 8:09 would have easily been in the top four, but it was a great field."

Buehler will attempt to qualify for state in the 800 Friday. He's seeded eighth in that event.

Miller advances in 400

Miller qualified for the finals of the 400 in a time of 50.30, fifth best of the eight finalists. The top four finishers in each heat advanced to the finals, along with the next four fastest times, regardless of heat.

"He did what he had to go on," Sabo said. "Again, the field was great. If you'd have looked at his time, you'd have thought he'd be in the top three."

Howard is seeded sixth in region. His PR of 50.02 is third best in school history.

4x200, 4x100 relays qualify for the finals

The 4x200 and 4x100 relay teams both advanced with the fifth-fastest time in the semifinals.

The 4x200 relay consisted of sophomore Carsyn Jones, seniors Zach Mullholand and Collin Brogan, and Howard. Brogan, Jones, sophomore Trace Johnson and Mullholand ran the 4x100 relay.

The 4x200 team had a time of 1:31.41. The four already own the seventh-fastest time in school history, a 1:30.60 clocking earlier this season.

"They were fantastic," Sabo said.

The 4x100 team had a season-best time of 43.82, beating its previous best of 43.88.

"They were fantastic, too, especially after three of those guys ran in the 4x200," Sabo said.

The 4x200 and 4x100 were 18 minutes apart for Brogan, Jones and Mullholand.

"They all ran great legs, and they think they can go even faster," Sabo said.

The 4x200 team is seeded fifth in the regional, and the 4x100 team is seventh. The 4x200 team also ranked 10th in the state going into the regional.

4x400 captures spot in finals

Eastwood's 4x400 relay team of Mullholand, Brogan, Miller and Howard advanced with a season-best time of 3:25.95, the sixth-fastest of the eight finalists. The four beat their previous best time of 3:28.62. Mullholand had a PR of 51.9, beating his previous best of 51.9.

"They really ran well. Wow, what a time," Sabo said. "This was a really good field, and it was exciting. They really ran well. Now, they have to come back and run even better on Saturday."

The 4x400 team ranked fourth in the regional and sixth in the state.

NEXT

The regional concludes Friday (May 29) at Harding Stadium, 500 Presidential Drive, Marion, Ohio, 43302. The meet IS NOT at Marion Harding High School. the field events start at 4:30 p.m., followed by the running events at 6 p.m.

MARION HARDING REGIONAL INFORMATION AND RESULTS

<https://www.athletic.net/TrackAndField/meet/651382/info>

STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS INFORMATION

<https://www.ohsaa.org/Sports-Tournaments/Track-Field/2026-Track-and-Field/2026-Track-Field-State-Coverage>

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