

## Team effort leads girls to third place at Oak Harbor



*All photos by: Danielle DeFalco; Athletes pictured: Lila Kiefer & Kayla Buehler*

### By Kevin Gordon

OAK HARBOR — Eastwood High School’s girls track and field team had plenty to be happy with Friday night.

Most of all, another quality team effort and a third-place finish in the Oak Harbor Invitational. Ava Kiefer’s first-place finish in the shot was complemented by four second-place finishes and seven third-place finishes as the Eagles totaled 118½ points in the 10-team meet — just one-half point behind runner-up Margaretta. Oak Harbor won with 142.

“It was a good night, especially considering the weather,” Eastwood head coach Nikki Sabo said. “This was the first time we’ve had to deal with any type of weather, other than wind, and it’s the first time we’ve had a delay. It’s the first time we’ve had to go inside for several years. We talked to them before we resumed the event and said we just want you to come out and compete and that’s exactly what they did.

“It was another team effort all the way around,” Sabo added. “We are all three facets (field, distance, and sprints). That helps with team camaraderie. Everyone feels like they contribute, and that’s awesome. It’s the epitome of track and field.”

Eastwood fashioned a strong meet in less-than-ideal weather conditions.

The Eagles scored in all 17 events, and had two scorers three of the five field events, and four of the eight non-relay running events. Team points were awarded to the top eight finishers in each event. Eastwood had 11 personal records during the meet.

“Everyone performed well, and everyone contributed,” said senior Jamie Lahey, one of the team captains who helped Eastwood to a third-place finish in the 4x800 relay in the first race after the delay. “We just stayed positive and uplift each other during the delay.

“You can’t worry about the weather or be negative about it,” Lahey said. “We just counted the time down until it was race time.”

The field events started at 4 p.m., but the meet was suspended for 45 minutes at 4:30 p.m. because of severe weather. The teams went to OH's auxiliary gym or their busses to wait out the delay.

Athletes had just 15 minutes to prepare for the start of the running events after the severe weather passed, although another heavy shower passed through the area shortly after the meet had resumed.

The running events originally were scheduled to start at 5 p.m., but their start was moved back to 5:15 p.m. because of the delay.

The field event athletes faced slick conditions in their venues.

The weather made it a challenge to post great times, heights or distances.

"It's good to have experience in those adverse conditions because you don't know what it's going to be like at NBCs (Northern Buckeye Conference Championships), districts or regionals," Sabo said. "We can say we've done this before, let's go with it."

Next for the Eagles are the NBC Championships Saturday at Eastwood. The Eagles have won 19 straight conference championships, winning the last 11 titles in the Suburban Lakes League and all eight titles in the NBC.

"I feel good about our team and where we're at," Sabo said. "We'll come out with confidence, and compete, and it will be a fun day."

### **'A little crazy'**

The 4x800 team of freshman Amelia Ward, junior Maisy Stevenson, Lahey and junior Addie Young was third in 10:26.57. Stevenson and Lahey both ran PR splits, and Ward and Young narrowly missed PRs, despite having just 15 minutes to prepare for the race, although Lahey said it seemed like only five minutes. The 4x800 was the first race after the delay.

"We didn't get to do our normal warmup," Lahey said. "It was a little crazy, but we adapted really well."



*Kayla Serres and Saylor King*

### **More relay success**

Eastwood's other three relay teams all finished third or better.

The 4x200 team of freshmen Saylor King, Kayla Buehler, Lila Kiefer and Reilly Might was third in 1:55.18 — respectably close to its season-best time of 1:52.41, even though the race was run in a heavy rain.

"Just running in the rain made us want to work for it more," Might said "You try to put the rain out of your mind as best you can. You can't let it affect you. It was tough to see, but we pushed through it. That showed in our finish."

The rain also made the handoffs a challenge.

“The handoffs are a bit harder,” Might said. “You just make sure you have a good grip on the baton, so you don’t drop it.”

The Eagles scored in the event, even though they ran in the first of two heats. The first heat is the slower heat, based on times coming into the meet.

“We knew we’d have to come out strong because we weren’t in the hot heat, so we could place against the hot heat,” Might said. “We’re very proud to get third place.”

The 4x400 team of junior Mikayla Hoelter, sophomore Talia Baum, junior Aubrey Haas, and sophomore Emma Downs was second in 4:21.24. The time was a season best, beating the previous best of 4:23.

The 4x100 team of King, sophomore Julia Sabo, Downs and Hoelter was third in 52.37, just off a season best of 52.03.



Talia Baum

### Closing in on the Top 10

Baum and Ward narrowly missed running Eastwood Top 10 times in the 800.

Baum was third in 2:28.19 and Ward was fifth in 2:30.60. — just off the time of 2:26.28 needed to make the Top 10.

“That was one of the things we wanted to do with (Baum) because we’re not sure how many more shots she’s going to have to run the 800,” Sabo said. “We’ll see what we’re going to do at NBCs and districts, but we wanted her to run it fresh tonight, and (Ward) was supposed to run it fresh, too. But we had to make some changes due to some injuries. They

both took it out hard. (The Top 10) is there for both of them, and it will happen.”

Both times were PRs. Baum’s previous best was 2:39.35, while Ward’s was 2:31.04.

### Distance events

Sophomore Haley Sponaugle had two PRs, finishing fifth in both the 1,600 (5:51.15) and the 3,200 in 13:01.80. Her previous bests were 6:00.77 and 13:08, respectively.

“Haley had two strong races,” Sabo said. “Her confidence is growing, and her times are coming down in both races. She’s learning those races, and how to compete and work on her split times. She’s trying to get those middle laps faster, and you can tell she’s working on it.”

Freshman Z Ramsey was eighth in the 3,200 in 13:01.80, a PR, lowering Ramsey’s previous best of 13:31.54.

“Z was beaming after the race,” Sabo said. “I don’t think I’ve ever seen a smile that big. Z went out hard and it was a great race. The times are dropping and Z’s confidence is growing with each competition.”

### **Other top finishes**

Kiefer won the shot put with a throw of 38-5¼, while senior Hannah Friend was second in the discus with a throw of 107-8, and Julia Sabo was second in the pole vault at 10-6.

The Eagles had two scorers in the discus, high jump and pole vault. Both of their athletes in the shot put and the long jump made the finals.

“A lot of them were double placers, and that’s one of the things we stress, we need to make the finals to score,” Nikki Sabo said. “They got to experience six throws and six jumps for the first time this season and to experience the energy that comes with doing six attempts.”

Junior Aubrey Haas finished second in the 100 hurdles in 17.02 and the 300 hurdles in 49.43.

Julia Sabo was third in both the 100 in 13.11 and the 200 in 27.28.

Sophomore Emma Downs had a PR in the 100 with a seventh-place finish in 13.69, beating her best of 13.69.

Stevenson and sophomore Kayden Firsdon both had PRs in the 400. Stevenson was eighth in 1:05.14, compared to her previous best 1:05.51. Firsdon ran 1:09.97, lowering her previous best of 1:10.55.

Sophomore Hannah Montag jumped 8-0 in the pole vault to finish fourth, matching her PR.

Complete results of the meet are available at:

<https://www.baumspage.com/track/oakharbor/2021/Results.pdf>