

Girls perform well again in winning meet championship at Whitmer



By Kevin Gordon

TOLEDO — Eastwood High School's girls track and field team added another line to its fast-growing résumé Friday night.

The Eagles won three events and scored 114 points to edge Tiffin Columbian by one point for the team championship of the eight-team Gold W Invitational at Whitmer High School. No other team scored more than 89 points.

Eastwood earned its championship by finishing ahead of Columbian in the 4x400 relay, the final event of the 22-event invitational. Columbian held a one-point lead over the Eagles going into the 4x400.

The Eagles' 4x400 team of seniors Maisy Stevenson and Aubrey Haas, freshman Lilly Mullholand and senior Mikayla Hoelter finished second in a season-best time of 4:18.24, good for a healthy 7.52 second margin over Columbian in third. Mullholand ran a personal-record split during the relay.

Eastwood won the meet for the first time after finishing second last season. The Eagles started competing in the meet in 2017.

"It's surreal to win this meet," said Hoelter, who also helped Eastwood finish third in the long jump relay and fourth in the 4x200 relay.

Eastwood was the smallest school in the meet. The Eagles compete in Division II, with the other seven schools all being Division I members.

"I knew winning would be a such a challenge with all of the DI schools," Hoelter said. "We were definitely coming here to compete. Every single person put in effort and contributed. It's such a team win, and that makes it so exciting."

"They're to the point, we're here to compete. We don't care what size school you are," Eastwood head coach Nikki Sabo said. "We're going to give our best effort, and wherever that places us, it places us. They're going after season bests and PRs. They take it as a challenge and thrive on it a bit."



All pictures: Danielle DeFalco Athletes: Bella Provo, Mallory Sandberg, and Megan Graham

The Eagles scored in 17 events, including first-place finishes in the triple jump, discus and pole vault. Eastwood added seven second-place finishes, two third-place efforts, three fourth-place finishes and two fifth-place efforts. The top six finishers in each event scored points.

The triple jump team of senior Megan Graham, and freshmen Mallory Sandberg and Bella Provo broke the Eastwood record with a combined distance of 86-1 $\frac{3}{4}$, bettering the mark of 85-8 $\frac{1}{2}$ set by Shaunna Jubenville, Allie Abke and Shelby Getz in 2017.

The field events were held as relays. Each school entered three athletes with the combined distance or height being used to determine the team finishes.

“Walking in here today, I could tell there was a special energy,” Graham said. “Everybody was really encouraging. I knew everyone was going to work hard and give their best, and they did. It worked out for the best.

“It could be intimidating going against these DI schools because we’re the smallest school here, but we weren’t intimidated by that,” Graham added. “You could tell everyone was giving their all to help the team win.”

The Eagles learned they had won when the final team scores were announced. The team standings were announced in reverse order from eighth to first, so the Eagles knew they had won and started cheering loudly when Columbian was announced as the runner-up.

“I had no idea where we stood as a team,” Hoelter said. “And hearing it was a one-point difference was so exciting. When we heard second place was Tiffin Columbian, we knew we had won. That was so exciting.”

The Eagles won an invitational for the second straight week after finishing first at Liberty-Benton April 1.

Eastwood totaled 11 PRs and seven season-bests at Whitmer.

“A total team effort again,” said Sabo, who didn’t see much of the meet until the final few events because she was coaching the team’s long jumpers and triple jumpers. Those events were held behind the home football bleachers and out of the view of the track.



Haley Sponaugle

"I was hearing bits and pieces about what was happening, and coaches and athletes would come over say we're doing well," Sabo said. "There were a lot of good performances. They gave great effort tonight. Another fun meet and fun environment. Kids are stepping up their confidence. The confidence is building, and you're seeing it in their performances."

The Eagles have performed well in all four of their competitions this season. They also won dual meets against Oak Harbor March 29 and Swanton April 5.

"There's no divide between grades. We're all one team," Graham said. "There are no freshmen, sophomores, juniors or seniors. Everybody encourages everybody. That really helps everyone out, the positive encouragement. When you're tired at the end of a race, you hear everyone screaming for you. It makes you not give up."

"Our atmosphere is so encouraging and so positive," Hoelter said. "Kids aren't getting put down. If you have a bad day, we tell them there are bad days, and you're going to get better. We believe in each other. Everyone knows how confident we are in each other's abilities."



Megan Graham

Triple jump payoff

Graham was third individually in the triple jump with a distance of 29-2½, the ninth-best mark in school history. Sandberg was fourth at 28-8, and Provo was fifth at 28-3¼.

The triple jump isn't sanctioned by the Ohio High School Athletic Association, although it is held at some dual meets and invitationals, and during the winter indoor season and the indoor state meet. The state indoor meet is held by the state coaches association.

"I didn't know what to expect," Graham said. "We all had a good mind-set going into it. It was nice to see we got first place and the school record. We gave it our all and kept working through it. We gave our best effort and it paid off."

And the payoff was a school record for the trio, with Graham landing on the school's all-time Top 10 in the event.

"That's really cool," Graham said. "That was exciting for me as a senior. I've always been a runner, and I wanted to try jumping. I finally decided to this year, and it paid off."

Graham, Sandberg and Provo tripled jumped for the first time in practice Wednesday. Graham also started long

jumping this season.

"I was happy to try the triple jump," Graham said. "I told myself I wasn't going to stress out about it. I went for it, and it worked out. I was a little confused at first because I didn't know the steps. I'm still getting used to the long jump. I didn't start doing it until this year, but it's been a lot of fun. All of us were happy to try the triple jump. I'm really glad I stuck with it."

Discus, pole vault teams finish first

The discus team of senior Ava Kiefer, and juniors Olivia Newsome and Jay Johnson won with a season-best distance of 316-7. Kiefer was first individually at 120-5, while Newsome was second at 111-10, and Johnson was seventh at 84-4.

The pole vault team of junior Julia Sabo, freshman Kyrie Henline and sophomore Joelle Jared won with a season-best height of 25-0. Sabo was first at 10-6, Henline tied for sixth at 8-0 and Jared cleared 6-6.

Second-place finishes

Also finishing second for Eastwood were:

- Shot put team of Kiefer, Newsome and junior Mariah Hahn with a season-best distance of 96-9. Kiefer was second at 37-0, Newsome was fifth and 32-3 and Hahn threw 27-6 (pr).
- High jump team of Stevenson, Mullholand and freshman Addie Hartman with a height of 13-4. Stevenson was second at 4-9, Mullholand was in a three-way tie for fifth at 4-7 and Hartman cleared 4-0.
- The distance medley team (800-200-400-1,600) team of sophomores Amelia Ward and Lila Kiefer, junior Kayden Firsdon and freshman Leah Emch, 9:51.1.
- 3,200, sophomore Haley Sponaugle, 12:18.24 (pr).
- 4x100 shuttle hurdles relay team of Haas, Sandberg, freshman Jordan Jensen and sophomore Reilly Might, 1:12.57 (sb). Sandberg, Jensen and Might ran PR splits.
- 4x800 team of Emch, Ward, senior Addie Young and Firsdon, 10:37.38 (SB). Emch and Firsdon ran PR splits.

Thirds, fourths and fifths

Finishing third for the Eagles were:

- The long jump team of junior Emma Downs, Hoelter and Jensen with a distance of 43-3½. Downs was fifth individually at 15-1¾ (pr), Hoelter was sixth at 14-11 and Jensen jumped 13-2½.
- 300 hurdles, Haas, 50.51.

Finishing fourth for the Eagles were:

- 4x200 team of Hoelter, Mullholand, Provo and Downs, 1:55.18.
- 200, Downs, 27.76.
- 4x100 throwers team of Hartman, Hahn, Ava Kiefer and Johnson, 1:08.92 (sb).

Finishing fifth for the Eagles were:

- 1,600, sophomore Z Ramsey, 5:51.35 (pr).
- 400, Stevenson, 65.94.

On the horizon

Eastwood travels to Genoa for a Northern Buckeye Conference tri-meet Tuesday with the host Comets and Lake. The Eagles then compete in the Napoleon Invitational Saturday.

Gold W Invitational results

<https://www.baumspage.com/track/trevent.php?peventid=16&table=C>