

## Finally healthy, Koprowski-Kistner looks to soar in long jump

**By Kevin Gordon**

LUCKEY — Bryce Koprowski-Kistner is close to full strength.

Now that the Eastwood High School junior is almost healthy, he's striving to return to his form of last season.

Koprowski-Kistner is the defending Northern Buckeye Conference champion in the long jump where he was a Division II regional qualifier last season. He also ran a leg on the Eastwood's 4x100 relay team which finished second in the NBC.

In addition to his long jumping and sprinting, Koprowski-Kistner is learning the hurdles.

"I feel pretty good right now, coming off my football injury," said Koprowski-Kistner, who suffered a broken fibula in his leg during Eastwood's Week 7 football game against Elmwood Oct. 1.



The injury happened when Koprowski-Kistner took a helmet to the side of the leg. The injury originally was thought to be a sprained ankle, which eventually was slow to heal. He still played in every game the rest of the season until the leg was hit again with three minutes remaining in the team's season-finale against Otsego Nov. 6 during the second round of the state playoffs.

Three days after the football season ended, Koprowski-Kistner finally went to the doctor. No surgery was needed because the bone already had started to heal, and wasn't out of place, he said.

But Koprowski-Kistner's doctor told him he to stay off his legs for a month. He eased back into lower body activity, and started squatting

and doing Plyometrics again in December.

He also did some ankle mobility exercises and eventually started running again

Koprowski-Kistner participated in the Eagles' indoor season which starts in December and ends with the Division II-III state meet the first weekend in March. Eastwood met once on Saturday or Sundays for either a practice or a meet.

"I managed to get through the pain," Koprowski-Kistner said. "I definitely feel a lot better than when I started running again indoors. A lot of the soreness has gone away. I just feel a lot better physically outdoors now, and it's making a difference."

Koprowski qualified for the state indoor meet in the triple jump, finishing 10th with a personal-record effort of 38-1, beating his previous best of 37-9¼. His best indoor long jump this season was 17-8 compared to his outdoor PR last season of 19-2.

"My long jump indoors wasn't where I wanted it to be," Koprowski-Kistner said. "It was nowhere close. I was knocking rust off, coming off the fracture. Now, I feel a lot more comfortable and a lot more explosive. I feel pretty good."

Koprowski remains fit at 5-foot-10, 180 pounds, even though he's gained 25 pounds since the end of football.

“He had a good year for us last year, and his speed has improved which is weird because he’s gotten heavier,” Eastwood head coach Brian Sabo said. “It’s a good weight. It’s impressive what he’s done.

“He’s worked really hard,” Sabo added. “He had to do nothing for a while and came back really quickly from his injury.”

Koprowski-Kistner was a first-team All-Northern Buckeye Conference football selection on offense as a running back. He rushed 168 times for 983 yards and 13 touchdowns, and caught four passes for 55 yards. The outside linebacker also made 23 tackles, including 16 solos.

“Now, I’m working on getting used to my body weight and utilizing it now,” Koprowski-Kistner said



### **Building on success**

The long jump is Koprowski-Kistner’s signature event. He won the NBC last season with a jump of 20-½ to finish first by just over a foot. He finished 10<sup>th</sup> in the regional with a distance of 19-9½, four places and almost 22 inches shy of a state berth. His PR of 21-2 came last season. His best through three meets this spring is 18-10.

“He’s very determined,” said Eagle coach Nikki Sabo, who works with the team’s long jumpers. “He works very hard. He wants his technique to be good, and he practices that. He’s very coachable. He tries to do your corrections right away. You put that together with his natural speed, he’s a good jumper.”

If Koprowski-Kistner reaches the 22-foot mark, he could crack the Top 10 on Eastwood’s Top 10 list. A jump of 22-¾ is needed to reach the top five. Only five jumpers have posted a distance of at least 22-0. The Top 10 starts

at 21-7.

The school record of 23-5¼ was set by Devin Snowden in 2015.

“I expect to win the league again, and I want to make it to state,” Koprowski-Kistner said of the long jump. “Being at regionals last year was a great experience. It definitely takes away the nerves aspect of it.

“Long jump is my most comfortable event,” Koprowski-Kistner added. “I’m the least nervous there, and jumping comes naturally now.”

### **Something new**

Koprowski-Kistner decided to add the 110 hurdles to his résumé for the first time this season. He didn’t run the hurdles during middle school track and his freshman season was wiped out by COVID.

“I had no idea he was interested in running the running the hurdles,” said Eagle assistant coach Ethan Downey, who works with the hurdlers. “I was pleasantly surprised when he first came out because I knew I was getting a good athlete with good speed.”

“He wanted to try something new, and I’m fine with that,” Brian Sabo said. “How do you know how you’ll do if you don’t try it?”

The early reviews of Koprowski-Kistner hurdling have been solid.

“He’s already doing technical events, and that he’s willing to take on another one says a lot,” Downey said. “I was very impressed because some things that are not natural movements in the hurdles, he picked up almost immediately.”

Koprowski-Kistner decided to try the hurdles because he wanted to attempt something new, and he wanted to do something that would help his mobility in football.

“I wanted to improve my mobility a lot more in a full speed aspect,” he said. “Doing mobility in the weight room helps a lot. But I felt I like needed to do something that was more full speed and that do with moving my entire body at a time to work on that aspect to improve for football.”

Koprowski-Kistner quickly learned to enjoy his new event.

“I loved it the first time I did it,” he said. “It was a good change of pace. It was humbling, in terms of not being comfortable with doing something for the very first time.

“I’ve picked it up pretty well,” he added. “It was harder than I thought it would be, but I feel I’ve done a pretty good job of overcoming the little tweaks and getting better at practice every day. I try to find one thing to get better every day in practice.”

Koprowski’s presence in the hurdles is making an already strong event for the Eagles even stronger.

“It’ll be a learning year,” Downey said. “He’ll compete well in the league and perform well during the season.”



### **Sprinting and a team guy, too**

Koprowski also runs the 4x100, and could be used in the 4x200 and the 100, Brian Sabo said. All of his events are early in a meet. Athletes can compete in a maximum of four events in a meet.

“He’s a big team guy. He’ll do anything we ask,” Brian Sabo said of Koprowski-Kistner, who is one of Eastwood’s captains. “He wants to do things the right way. He’s disciplined. He’s a good kid, a good person. I’m happy he was voted captain. He leads by example. This year, he’s dived in and helped more people.”

Koprowski-Kistner has a 4.2 grade-point average and is a member of the National Honor Society. He plans to attend college, and compete in football or track and field at his school. He’s planning to pursue a major in pre-chiropractic and sports medicine, in hopes of a career as a chiropractor, athletic trainer or athletic physical therapist.

“I really like his passion and his work ethic,” Brian Sabo said. “Sometimes, you have to calm him down if something doesn’t go his way. He’s very intense, but that’s more of a good thing than a bad thing, once you learn to channel that well. I love that we still have him for this year and next year.”