

Girls' team effort produces Eastwood Relays championship



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By Kevin Gordon

Eastwood High School's girls track and field team is building and improving each week. The Eagles' last gem came Friday night when they won the Eastwood Relays. Eastwood won three events and scored in all 17 events to total 110 points and edge runner-up Liberty-Benton by eight points. Sylvania Northview was third in the 13-team meet with 85½ points, while Findlay was fourth with 83½.

The Eagles completed their three first-place finishes with five second-place finishes, four third-place finishes and two fourth-place finishes.

The top eight finishers in each event scored team points, with the top five finishers receiving medals.

"Our goal is to win and leave everything on the track, and that's exactly what we did and that got us to first place and the combined championship," said senior Aubrey Haas, who won the 300 hurdles, helped Eastwood win the 4x100 shuttle hurdles relay and finish third in the 1,600 sprint medley relay.

The Eagles shared the meet's combined championship with their boys team. The combined championship is determined by adding together each school's points scored in the boys and girls meet.

Eastwood's boys were second in their meet with 106 points, giving the Eagles a total of 216 points. Findlay was second with 202½.

"A lot of people had solid performances," Eastwood head coach Nikki Sabo said. "We were pretty solid in all three facets, and it showed again tonight."

The Eagles held a one-point lead two-thirds of the way through the 17 events, but they quickly pulled away and had almost clinched the championship going into the 4x400 relay, the final event — assuming they didn't get disqualified and still ran well during that race. Eastwood had extended its lead to 10 points going into the 4x400 where it finished third, one place behind Liberty-Benton.

"We competed hard all night long," Sabo said. "Going against great competition is going to help us in the long run."

The Eagles have won three of their four weekend invitationals this season. They won the Liberty-Benton Relays April 1 and the Gold W Invitational at Whitmer April 8, and were second in the Napoleon Invitational April 16.



Aubrey Haas

“We got a taste of it at Whitmer,” Haas said. “To know we won competing against some of these schools at Whitmer was a taste of reality in terms of knowing what we’re capable of and what we’re exactly able to do. We saw what big things we’re going to do this year.

“Every single event, we have depth,” Haas added. “It’s not just one person. We have multiple girls capable of competing and contributing in every event.”

The bulk of the teams in the Eastwood Relays were Division I schools, competing in the Northern Lakes League and the Three Rivers Athletic Conference. Liberty-Benton is the defending champion in the Blanchard Valley Conference champion.

“Everyone gave their all. All of our hard work paid off tonight,” said Eagle junior Emma Downs, who helped the Eagles win the 800 sprint medley relay and finish second in the 4x100 relay.

Downs also finished sixth in the 100 and helped Eastwood finish third in the long jump.

“We’re a small school, but we compete like a big school. That’s really encouraging,” Downs said. “When we have meets like this and win, this fuels us to keep going. It gives us energy and excites us. We’re ready for more improvement and more success.”

The Eagles were competing for the first time since winning at Napoleon after their Tuesday dual meet at Fostoria was canceled.

“I was concerned when our meet was canceled on Tuesday,” Sabo said. “I didn’t know if we’d come out with energy or come out a little flat, but they came out energized and ready to go.

“The field events got us off to a good start, and it sends positive energy throughout the team,” Sabo added. “That’s one thing I ask them to do — if you hear something good happened, spread the word. If other people are doing well, it creates an I’m going to do well, too, mentality. That’s what they did.”

Sophomore Saylor King, junior Julia Sabo, senior Mikayla Hoelter, and Downs won the 800 sprint medley (100-100-200-400) relay in 2:01.23, a season-best.

The 4x100 team of sophomore Reilly Might, Sabo, King and Downs was second in 52.17, a season-best.

Downs was sixth in the 100 in a PR time of 13.14 — one-tenth of a second off the school’s all-time top 10. Six runners are tied for seventh at 13.04, and all six were hand-timed then converted to FAT by adding .24 of a second to the hand-timed clocking.

Downs posted the time even though she ran in the first heat. The heat had just three runners after two runners scratched. She won her heat by over two seconds, meaning she had no one running alongside her.

In the long jump, Downs was second at 15-6½, just one-half inch shy of her career best at Napoleon.

“We asked her to do quite a bit, and she stepped up to the challenge,” Sabo said. “She ran well, and she’s getting more consistent in the long jump. She’s improving in that event.”

Eastwood finished third in the long jump with Downs, Hoelter and freshman Kyrie Henline combining for a distance of 43-9, a season-best. Downs was fifth individually, while Hoelter was ninth at 14-8 and Henline jumped 13-6½.

Haas won the 300 hurdles in 50.35, ahead of Northview's Maria Smithers. Smithers was second in 51.48.

The 4x100 shuttle hurdles relay team of Might, freshmen Mallory Sandberg and Jordan Jensen, and Haas won in 1:10.51, a season-best.

The 1,600 sprint medley team of Haas, Hoelter, freshman Lilly Mullholand and senior Maisy Stevenson was third in 4:40.24. Mullholand's split of a 63.4 was a PR.



Mariah Hahn

Second-place finishes

The Eagles had four other second-place finishes:

- Discus — senior Ava Kiefer, and juniors Olivia Newsome and Jay Johnson, 306-7. Kiefer was third individually at 124-0 (pr), while Newsome was 10th at 97-3 and Johnson threw 85-4.

Kiefer moved closer to Jena Jacoby for second place on Eastwood's all-time list. She already ranked third, but improved her distance with the 124-0 mark. Jacoby is second, throwing 128-6 in 2012.

- Shot put — Kiefer, Newsome and Mariah Hahn, 100-6¼. Kiefer was fourth individually at 37-8½, while Newsome was seventh at 34-0½ and junior Hahn threw 28-9¼ (pr).

Kiefer also was second in the hammer throw, 120-6.

- Pole vault — Sabo, Henline and sophomore

Joelle Jared, 25-6. Sabo was first individually at 11-0, while Henline tied for eighth at 8-6 and Jared cleared 6-0.

Third-place finishes

Eastwood had two other third-place finishes:

- 4x800 — junior Talia Baum, sophomore Amelia Ward, senior Addie Young and junior Kayden Firsdon, 10:40.75.

- 4x400 — Stevenson, Firsdon, Mullholand and Hoelter, 4:26.05.

Other contributors

Also scoring for the Eagles were, by event:

- High jump — sixth, team of Stevenson, freshman Addie Hartman and Mullholand, 9-0. Stevenson tied for ninth at 4-8, while Hartman was in a nine-way tie for ninth at 4-4.

- Distance medley (800-400-1,200-1,600) — fourth, freshman Leah Emch, Baum, and sophomores Z Ramsey and Haley Sponaugle, 13:38.03 (sb). Emch and Baum both ran PR splits.



Leah Emch

- 4x200 — eighth, team of Might, Henline, and sophomores Lila Kiefer and Ally Kwiatkowski, 2:00.80.
- 1,600 — fourth, Emch, 5:36.29 (pr).

Energy and atmosphere

The Eagle coaches and athletes were thrilled with the environment and energy at the meet. The meet has one become of the best in Northwest Ohio, thanks to the amenities and environment offered at the meet.

In addition to the individual medals to the top five finishers, medals were awarded to every member winning team. Among the other extras were performance boards at the field events, jumbo lane markers, baskets for the athletes clothes at the start of each event and a timing board near the finish line.

The medals are awarded shortly after each event, and many of the athletes wear those medals around their neck immediately after receiving them.

“I love hearing the medals clanking,” junior Noah Smith said.

Brian Sabo tweaked the order of events to end the meet sooner and to improve the flow of events. The meet had a football-

sized crowd, with fans also lining the fence from the finish line area all the way around the track to the start of the visiting bleachers.

“The atmosphere was great,” Brian Sabo said. “The energy of the kids and the atmosphere made the meet. We try to give the meet some nice little touches. The flow of the meet was good. We were more organized, and it went better than last year. The meet flowed well.”

The atmosphere was enhanced by public address announcer Mike Godfrey, who keeps the fans and teams well informed with information. The information includes tidbits about the top performers at the start of each event.

Josh Schulte and Craig Rutherford handled the timing and scoring in the press box, and Jesse Squire interviewed the winners of each event immediately after those events. The interviews were streamed live on social media. Squire is a former Bowling Green State University track teammate of Brian Sabo and Eagle girls head coach Nikki Sabo.

MileSplit Ohio live streamed the meet.

Nikki Sabo said it takes approximately 40-50 workers to run a successful meet, adding half of those workers were Eagle athletes who don't compete in the meet.

“That's what it takes to run a high-quality meet like this. You'll never run another meet like this,” said Eagle senior Aubrey Haas. “It's so special, and none of it could be done without the workers from our team. For them to say I'm not competing, but I'm still going to contribute to help this run smoothly is awesome.”

“Sometimes, people don't realize how important that is,” Nikki Sabo said. “They're so important to running this event.”

The athletes helped with the individual events, timing at the finish line, awards, the clothes baskets, starting blocks, the hurdles and video of the meet.

“Our teammates who weren't competing made sure the meet ran smoothly,” Smith said.

“This is a big meet, and there were no complications at all.”

“Our kids take a lot pride in the meet, and it shows in how well the meet is run,” Brian Sabo said. “I appreciate them doing that.”

Brian Sabo introduced the Gauntlet 1,600 to the meet, borrowing the idea from Plainfield North High School (Ill.). During the race, Sabo had the Eagles’ boys and girls athletes, who weren’t competing in the race, line up in the outside lanes to cheer on the runners from every school during the race. The athletes lined up on the front stretch.

The cheering line originally started with only Eastwood athletes, who then were quickly joined by athletes from other schools. The athletes then did the same during the 4x400 relay to finish the meet.

“The 1,600, the 4x400 ... you could hear everyone cheering,” said Smith, who ran the 4x400. “That gives you even more energy. That was a lot of fun.”

“I wasn’t even running then, but the energy from track is different than any other sport,” Haas said. “You don’t believe it until you’re involved. The environment doesn’t compare to anything else. It’s so positive. The atmosphere tonight was awesome.”

Gauntlet 1,600 video

<https://twitter.com/EastwoodTF/status/1517966912147398658>

On the horizon

Eastwood visits Woodmore to face the host Wildcats and Otsego in an NBC tri-meet Tuesday. The meet is Eastwood’s only competition of the week.

Eastwood Relays results

<https://www.baumspage.com/track/trevent.php?peventid=1145&table=C>