

Girls earn NBC title with team effort



By Kevin Gordon

GENOA — There aren't enough superlatives to describe how well Eastwood High School's girls track and field team performed Friday night (May 15).

But in a word the Eagles were fantastic.

They won three events, scored in all 17 events and totaled 140½ points to earn their first Northern Buckeye Conference championship since 2022. Eastwood edged runner-up Otsego with 134, and third-place and defending champion Oak Harbor with 133 in the eight-team meet at Genoa High School.

The Eagles had finished second in the NBC in each of the last seasons.

"It's amazing to win the league after not having won it the last couple of years," said Eastwood junior Josie Appelhans, who won the 200, ran on the winning 4x200 and 4x100 relay teams which set NBC records, and finished second in the 100.

"We deserved it because we performed so well, and we worked hard and improved so much during the season," Appelhans added. "I knew we were going to win it. I'm so proud of everyone."

The Eagles still trailed Otsego and Oak Harbor with four events remaining — 300 hurdles, 800, 200 and 4x400 relay — before coming back to win the championship. Going into those final four events, Otsego led with 108 points, followed by Oak Harbor with 100 and Eastwood with 99½.

"Everyone was really positive today and it showed in the way we performed," said Eagle sophomore Lauren Schuerman, who was third in both the 100 and 200, and ran on the winning 4x200 and 4x100 relay teams. "Everyone went out hard and was aggressive in their events. We had nothing to lose, so we went after it in every event."

The top eight finishers in each event scored team points. The points were awarded on a 10-8-6-5-4-3-2-1 basis.

Schools could enter two athletes in the 13 individual events and one team in each of the four relays.

All three of Eastwood's first-place finishes came Friday, and they had two scorers in seven of the 10 individual finals held Friday. The Eagles also had two scorers in all three finals Wednesday.

Eastwood had a team effort to win the title, scoring 72 points in the eight individual running events, 37½ points in the five field events and 31 points in the four relays.

During the two-day meet, the Eagles had 18 personal records, two season bests, two conference records and seven performances that ranked in the school's all-time Top 10 list and one school record.

"We knew we had to perform well today, and we did," Eastwood head coach Nathan Howard said. "I'm very proud of them."

The Eagles came on strong in those final four events. Freshman Sophie Gillespie was fourth and sophomore Karissa Nelson was fifth in the 300 hurdles, freshman Ava Majzun was second and junior Brynn Sheets was seventh in the 800, and Appelhans won the 200 and Schuerman was third.

The 4x400 relay team of Majzun, freshman Gabby Provo, Gillespie and junior Camille Foes clinched the conference championship with a third-place finish.

Eastwood actually had built a 7½-point lead over Oak Harbor going into the 4x400 relay — the final event of the meet. The Eagles only needed to finish sixth or higher in the 4x400 to win their championship.

"We came out and gave effort," Appelhans said. "It was every person, every event. We knew it was going to be tight. We had the mentality of PRing, and going out and running our races."

800 was a 'huge turning point'

Howard said the Eagles' results from Majzun and Sheets in the 800 were a "huge turning point" in the meet.

Majzun finished second in 2:25.43 to Oak Harbor junior Olivia Cherry, who won in 2:17.33. Sheets was seventh in 2:33.16.

Majzun and Sheets both ran significant personal records. Majzun's previous best was 2:30.00, and Sheets lowered her previous best of 2:36.73. Majzun's time was the ninth-fastest in school history

"(Majzun) went out and ripped it up, and (Sheets) wasn't supposed to score and she scored points," Howard said. "(Majzun) went out and put herself in a good spot, and kept competing. That kind of stuff is exactly how you win a league championship.

Both finished higher than expected, based on times entered for the meet. Majzun had the fifth-fastest time coming in, while Sheets was ninth.

Majzun went out strong early and maintained second place throughout the race.

"Oh my gosh, she was amazing," Appelhans said of Majzun, who celebrated her 14th birthday Saturday (May 16). "She's a little fireball. She attacks everything. When she's in that mindset, I know she's going to do it."

Sheets also ran a strong first lap.

"She ran a great first lap and put herself out there and fought," Howard said of Sheets.

"That's all I asked them to do, put yourself out there in a good spot."

The 800 was part of a solid meet for the Eagle distance runners, who had two big PRs in the 1,600 as freshman Taylor Mangette and junior Mackenzie Chaffee both broke the six-minute mark.

Mangette was seventh in 5:51.76, beating her previous best of 6:02.35. Chaffee was 10th in 5:58.15, lowering her PR from 6:03.35.

“Effort and PRs are all you can ask for,” Howard said.

Field events set the tone

The Eagles received an early boost from Schuerman and Foos in the long jump, and sophomore Skylar Chrisman and senior Piper Sutton in the pole vault.

Schuerman was third at 16-7³/₄ and Foos was fourth at 15-10³/₄ in the long jump. Both were PRs. Schuerman’s previous best was 16-6³/₄, while Foos’ was 15-8³/₄.

Schuerman’s jump was good for a three-way tie for 10th on Eastwood’s all-time list.

In the pole vault, Chrisman tied for third and Sutton was fifth. Both cleared 9-0, with the places decided on misses. Chrisman tied her PR.

“The long jump and the pole vault were great for us, and I knew the energy was there,” Howard said. “They were competing just like we asked them to. That was the beginning of it.”

“There was really good competition, and they looked really good,” Howard added about the pole vaulters. “The mentality of those two to have a PR mindset, that’s exactly what they did and it worked out great.”

All six of Schuerman’s jumps were at least 16-0. Each of the 15 jumpers received three attempts during the preliminaries with the top nine individuals advancing to the finals. In the finals, each jumper received three more attempts in an attempt to improve their standing.

Schuerman was the third seed for the event.

“I knew I could do well, so I had to go out and give it the best I could,” Schuerman said. “That’s the best I’ve jumped all year. I was very consistent. I’ve been working on it so much this season that it all came together tonight, and the weather was good. It was just a great day.”

Also in the field events, senior Kennedy Ameling was sixth in the shot put with a throw of 32-3¹/₄ and freshman Addison Hannan threw 27-10.

Appelhans first, Schuerman third in 200

Appelhans won the 200 in 26.00 and Schuerman was third in 26.45. Appelhans just missed her school record of 25.82 last season and her season best of 25.97, while Schuerman’s time was a PR and the sixth-fastest time in school history. Her previous best was 26.57.

“I knew the 200 was my race,” Appelhans said. “I went out and attacked it, giving it everything I had.”

“I got out strong and tried to pass as many people as I could,” Schuerman said.

In the 100, Appelhans was second in 12.67, while Schuerman was third at 12.70. Appelhans just missed her school record of 12.62 during Wednesday’s semifinals, while Schuerman’s time was the second-fastest in school history.

“I didn’t get off to a great start in the 100, but I finished strong,” Appelhans said.

“It was a pretty good race,” Schuerman said. “I wanted to beat people and score points for the team.”

Their finishes in the 200 all but clinched the NBC championship for the Eagles.

“We ask them to do so much, and they never complain,” Howard said. “They always go after it. Everything they do is 100 percent. There wouldn’t be a better way to do it (clinch the conference championship) because those two sum up this team better than anyone else.”

In the NBC, Appelhans’ time in the 200 finals was the eighth-fastest and her 100 finals time was the ninth fastest. During the semifinals, she ran the sixth-fastest time in the 100 and the seventh-fastest time in the 200. Only performances in the NBC meet are used to determine the conference records and Top 10.

4x200, 4x100 break NBC records

The 4x200 team of Provo, Gillespie, Majzun and Appelhans won in 1:45.27 to break the NBC record of 1:47.60 set by Oak Harbor last year. The time also was the second-fastest in school history. Gillespie and Majzun both had PR splits, and Appelhans ran a dominant anchor leg to beat Oak Harbor by 1.37 seconds.

“That was amazing. That got my spirits up and got me in the mentality of winning,” said Appelhans, who added she was upset after losing the 100 only 10 minutes earlier. “That made me come back stronger in my other events. I’m so proud of everyone.”

It marked the second time this season Eastwood had run a school Top 10 time in the 4x200. Schuerman, Provo, Foos and Appelhans had a time of 1:45.72.

In the 4x100 relay, freshman Macie Bradley, Appelhans, sophomore Macy Shoemaker and Schuerman won in 49.92 to break the NBC record of 50.08 set by Oak Harbor last year. It also was the third-fastest time in Eastwood history.

“That was amazing, too,” Appelhans said. “I’m so proud of all of us. We’ve been chasing that 49 time for years. We knew 100 percent we could run that time.

“We’ve been working on running that time forever,” Schuerman said.

The Eagles had a Top 10 time in the 4x100 for the second time season. Earlier, Foos, Appelhans, Shoemaker and Schuerman posted the fourth-best time with a 50.04 clocking. Schuerman, Shoemaker and Appelhans also remain from the seventh-fastest 4x100 team which had a time of 50.26 last season.

The 4x400 relay of Majzun, Provo, Gillespie and Foos was third in 4:18.34.

Foos and Provo also scored in the 400. Foos was third in a season-best time of 62.13 and Provo was seventh in 65.99. Foos’ previous best time this season was 62.22.

Nelson, Gillespie run well again in hurdles

Nelson and Gillespie placed in both hurdles races, with Nelson PRing in both races.

Nelson was third in the 100 hurdles in 16.39 and Gillespie was fifth in 17.07. Nelson’s time was the ninth fastest in Eastwood history and beat her previous best of 16.62.

The 300 hurdles saw Gillespie finish fourth in 49.66 and Nelson finished fifth in 50.57. Nelson’s previous PR was 51.15.

“They ran hard and gave great effort,” Howard said.

Maturity, leadership and freshmen

The Eagles have a young team this season, dominated by their freshmen, sophomore and junior classes.

“We knew this was a young team that had to grow up a little bit, and they did today,” Howard said. “Wednesday, we were a little scared, a little nervous, and, today, they

weren't at all. They were competing with joy; and that's exactly what we asked them to do."

Howard praised the team's captains for their leadership and bringing the team along. Ameling, Appelhans, Foos, Sutton, and seniors Makenna Nelson and Caitlyn Stiner are the captains.

"We have great leadership," Howard said. "The captains on this team are amazing. They're selfless. They care for others. They pick each other up. When a team knows it's going to be supported no matter what, it frees them to go after big things. That's what we saw tonight."

The freshmen class has played an important role in the success of the team this season, Seven freshmen competed in the conference meet and all seven scored in at least one event — Bradley, Gillespie, Hannan, Mangette, Mazjun, Provo and Katelin Russell.

Russell was a member of the 4x800 relay which finished fourth Wednesday. Hannan was sixth in the discus Wednesday.

"The freshmen have talent, and they were well coached in middle school," Howard said. "They came in prepared, and I would expect nothing less from our middle school coaches. They're fun kids. They're nice. They fit in well with this group and they're willing to work hard and do what we ask of them. They love to compete. They're not afraid of anything. "You can tell when they're being goofy that they're freshmen," Howard added. "But when they're competing, they don't compete like freshmen."

The freshmen have contributed since joining the team for the winter indoor season which started in December.

"With our winter season, having that experience, really helped them," Appelhans said. "They've really fit in well. They've fit in with our culture really well. We're all such good friends."

NEXT

The Eagles compete in the Division IV district meet May 20 (Wednesday) and May 22 (Friday) at Memorial Stadium in Fostoria. The meet IS NOT at Fostoria High School. The address for Memorial Stadium is 530 Stadium Drive, Fostoria, Ohio, 44830.

NBC CHAMPIONSHIPS RESULTS

<https://www.baumspage.com/track/trevent.php?peventid=177&table=C>

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