

## Kiefer finishes eighth in shot put with PR, earns All-Ohio honors



### By Kevin Gordon

COLUMBUS — Ava Kiefer fashioned a great ending to her already successful high school career.

The Eastwood High School senior threw a PR, finished in eighth place and earned All-Ohio recognition in the shot put during Saturday's Division II state track and field championships at Ohio State University's Jesse Owens Stadium.

Kiefer threw 39-1 $\frac{3}{4}$  on her first attempt of the competition to add one-quarter of an inch to her previous PR set last season.

The all-state honors are presented to the top eight finishers in each event at state, and those finishers are recognized on the awards stand.

Kiefer was one of three Eagles who competed in the girls meet. The others were: junior Julia Sabo, who finished 11<sup>th</sup> in the pole vault with a height of 11-0; and junior Olivia Newsome, who fouled on all three of her throws in the discus.

"I'm really happy because I threw farther than I ever have," said Kiefer, whose best throw this season had been a 38-6 $\frac{1}{2}$  mark during the Eastwood Throwers Invitational May 8.

"I had a good feeling coming in that I would throw well today," Kiefer added.

Kiefer's first attempt set the tone for the day. She was third after the first flight, seventh after the preliminaries and then eighth after the finals.

The 18 qualifiers were divided into two flights for the preliminaries where they each received three throws. The top nine throwers advanced to the finals for three more throws in an attempt to improve their marks.

"That throw felt really good because it let me know I could still throw that far. It felt good, and it pushed me to throw even farther," Kiefer said of opening throw. "It sort of took the



pressure of getting a big throw in, but there's still pressure to make the finals. I felt really good about making the finals after that throw, but there were a lot of good throwers here."

Kiefer nearly delivered another big throw on her second attempt in the prelims. The shot landed on the 40-foot line, sending white chalk flying into the air. But the throw was ruled a foul because Kiefer's foot hit the lip of the throwing ring.

"I could feel my foot hit (the lip) when my it came down," Kiefer said.

Kiefer also had foot fouls called on her last two throws in the finals, one on another toss that was clearly past the 40-foot line.

"It's a bummer they were fouls, but at least I know I can hit that mark, and I continue to work towards that goal of hitting 40-0," Kiefer said.

Kiefer's final throw in the prelims covered 32-11, and her first mark in the finals was 35-5¼. Her best throw in the prelims virtually guaranteed her a spot in the finals.

"It was really nerve-wracking to watch the other flight because there were good girls in both flights," Kiefer said. "Nothing is for sure until they announce the finalists."

Kiefer was seeded 11<sup>th</sup> in the event, based on marks from the four regional meets.

"She threw really well," said Eagle assistant coach Whitney Recker, who works with the throwers. "She competed. She competed really hard today. She came in 11<sup>th</sup>, knew where she was and really went after it. It was fun to watch."

The six state qualifiers from the Lexington High School regional, including Kiefer, dominated the competition. All six advanced to the finals, and five of the top eight finishers were from the Lexington.

The state qualifiers consisted of the top four finishers in each regional, and the next two best distances overall, regardless of regional. Kiefer was one of the at-large qualifiers, finishing sixth at Lexington.

Norton sophomore Morgan Hallett made it back-to-back state championships in the shot with a throw of 46-7, just shy of the state record of 48-10¾ set in 1999. Hallett also won the discus Friday. The top five finishers all threw at least 40-10½.

Hallett won the Lexington regional, breaking the regional record in the process.

"The competition was really good. That pushed all of us to throw our best," Kiefer said.

Kiefer originally moved into second place on Eastwood's all-time Top 10 in the shot last season when she threw 39-1½. Recker is the school-record holder, throwing 43-5¼ as Whitney Hartman in 2004.

"That was really exciting," Eastwood head coach Nikki Sabo said of Kiefer. "She threw a PR on her first throw, and then went after it after that. She took that weight off her shoulders with the first throw, that she could be aggressive and go after an even bigger throw. Her throwing coaches (Recker and Tyler McCrory) were proud of the effort she gave."

Kiefer will throw collegiately at the University of Findlay.

"I'm really happy with my career, and now I have college to look forward to, and I can continue to better myself," Kiefer said. "This was a good way to end my career."

### **Sabo, Newsome compete at state**

Julia Sabo matched her season-best in the pole vault by clearing 11-0 for 11<sup>th</sup> place. She missed three attempts 11-6, which would have matched her school record set last season at state when she tied for fourth place.

"It's not what I wanted," Julia Sabo said. "I attempted a PR, which is nice. I wanted to get it, but I didn't, and I have a lot of things to work on for next year.

"This definitely motivates me for next year," Julia Sabo added. "It puts a different perspective on my training. I'm glad I'm here, but I was hoping to be better and place better. Hopefully, I can get back here next year. I'm going to work a lot harder than I did this year."

Julia Sabo started the competition by clearing 9-6, 10-0 and 10-6 on her first attempt, and 11-0 on her third attempt.

The state champion was Westfall senior Peyton Proffitt, who cleared 12-9. The second- and third-place finishers both made 11-10, three more vaulters cleared 11-6, and Sabo was one of five vaulters to make 11-0.

"It was a good day, matched her season best," said Eastwood assistant coach Ethan Downey, who works with the pole vaulters. "We just didn't have another bar in us to get on the podium, but, overall, it was a solid day. Good warmups. Good jumps at 11-0. Good attempts at 11-6."

On Friday, Newsome fouled on all three of her attempts in the discus. She had one throw of at least 125-0 during warmups, and two throws of at least 125-0 when she fouled during the actual competition. Those throws were fouls because the discus landed out of sector. A throw of 121-2 was needed to make the finals.

"That was the annoying part of the fouls," Newsome said. "Those throws would have gotten me to finals."

Newsome threw a PR of 125-7 at the Lexington regional to qualify for state. She PRd four times this season, all in the last six weeks of the season. She enters next season third on the Eagles' all-time Top 10 list.

The discus and shot areas at state are located west of the stadium, in a stadium-like setting for fans, who filled the bleachers and sat in grassy hillside areas surrounding the side-by-side throwing areas. Many fans brought lawn chairs.

"The atmosphere was good, but I wasn't nervous," Newsome said. "Nobody made you feel nervous. We were talking to each other, joking, having fun. It was such a good atmosphere. I enjoyed coming here a lot. Hopefully, if I make it here next year, I'll know what to expect. It was a good experience, and I'm glad I got here."

"She definitely came here to compete," McCrory said. "This is a great experience that will help her tremendously next year."

Like the shot, the Lexington regional qualifiers for state fared well in Columbus.

Four of the top seven finishers at state came from the Lexington regional, including the first- and second-place finishers. Hallett won with a throw of 156-4, while defending state champion and Liberty-Benton senior Izzy Granger was second at 154-10. No other thrower had a mark of better than 128-8.

"There were a lot of really good throwers here," Newsome said. "That pushed all of us to get better. It's fun to compete in an environment like that."

Now, Newsome is looking forward to next season.

“I had a good season up until state, so that was good,” Newsome said. “That was helping my confidence. The fouls today are my motivation for next season. I’ll start working harder to make sure this doesn’t happen again.

“I’ve grown a lot since last year,” Newsome added. “I moved my PR up about six feet, which isn’t a whole lot, but my mental game has changed a whole lot. I don’t get as nervous any more. I just go out and do my thing.”

And a return to Columbus is Newsome’s top goal.

“I’m excited about next season,” Newsome said. “I love track season and competing. Now, with having my freshman season canceled because of Covid, I make the most of all of my time I have with track.”

Nikki Sabo was pleased Newsome and Julia Sabo competed at Jesse Owens Stadium, OSU’s track and soccer facility, which has a capacity of 10,000.

The state championships returned to Jesse Owens Stadium for the first time since 2019, The 2020 state championships were canceled because of Covid, and last season’s three state meets were held separately at high schools in suburban Columbus.

“It’s great for them to be in Jesse Owens Stadium, and see that atmosphere,” Nikki Sabo said. “It’s very different than when you’re competing at a high school. Both of them embraced it, and were not intimidated by it. It’s good they got that learning experience, and, hopefully, they got some motivation to get back here next year and improve on where they stood this year.”

### **Meet results**

<https://oh.milesplit.com/meets/485680-ohsaa-div-2-state-track-and-field-championship-2022/results#.YpwQNpDMK3k>