

Recker thriving after taking a chance on track and field



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By Kevin Gordon

Ethan Recker took a chance and joined the track and field team his sophomore year.

Now, just over two years later, he's emerging as one of the track and field team's top throwers and leaders.

The senior also is popular with his teammates and coaches because of his easy-going personality, great work ethic, positive energy and his desire to see his teammates succeed.

Recker has steadily improved and is striving to make his final season his best, including placing in the shot put and the discus at the Northern Buckeye Conference championships. He's also hoping to crack Eastwood's all-time Top 10 in the shot put, his best event.

"He is super coachable," Eagle head coach Brian Sabo said. "Anything you tell him, he'll attempt to do it, and he'll do with great effort. If he fails, he doesn't stay down and he'll tell you he's going to fix this, this and this.

"He has such a dynamic personality," Sabo added. "He's fun. He's funny. He makes fun of himself. He can poke fun at people. He knows when to be serious. He treats people really well. He's like another coach for us."

The decision

Recker wasn't even a member of the track and field team during middle school, or even his freshman season at Eastwood. But he finally joined the track and field team as a sophomore, in time for the winter indoor season.

Recker had played baseball as a freshman for the Eagles after playing baseball and soccer throughout his youth days. He's also been a part of the Eastwood football program since middle school, and played basketball in middle school and as a freshman.

Recker is 5-foot-11, 200 pounds, playing offensive guard, nose guard and defensive end on the football team.

"It was a tough decision and I still love baseball, and I do miss it, at times," Recker said. "I loved baseball and had a lot of friends on the team, but track was the better move for me because I became a better football player and a better athlete. I was able to get stronger and my footwork improved."

Recker first considered joining the track and field program at the encouragement of his football teammates, including 2024 Eagle



Recker with Ian Sibbersen.



graduate Ian Sibbersen, who took Recker under his wing once he joined the track and field team. Sibbersen is throwing collegiately at Ohio Northern University.

Recker is related to Eastwood assistant coach Whitney Recker, who married Recker's cousin, Scott. Whitney Recker encouraged Ethan Recker to try track during the family's Thanksgiving dinner in November 2022.

"I liked his athleticism," Whitney Recker said. "He's stronger. Knowing him personally, I knew he was going to be coachable. He's probably one of the most coachable athletes I've ever

coached. Whatever you say, he tries, and that's all you can ask for as a coach. He's a good kid."

Ethan Recker had built a relationship with Sabo, who coaches middle school football and runs the Eagle weightroom with Andy Friess, who also coaches middle school football.

"Whitney said you already have the relationships, you're athletic and stronger, and you'll be good at it," Ethan Recker said.

He eventually talked to Sabo about changing sports, and switched to track.

"I knew I was taking a risk, but I trusted everyone on the track team," Recker said.

"(Sibbersen) was one of my best buddies, and I had known coach Sabo since the fifth grade.

"Knowing if I came out for track and wasn't successful, I'd still become a better person because of the environment of the program and being around Sabo, being around this team," Recker added. "That's what really flipped me. Even if I'm terrible at throwing, I'm still going to become a better person and I'm still going to learn a lot from this. No matter what, I was going to get better."

Difficult early days

Like many throwers, Recker's early days weren't easy. The discus, shot put and hammer throw in the spring, and the shot and the weight throw in the winter aren't easy events. They're technical events and good footwork is a must.

"I was really struggling with it. I remember almost falling a few times," Recker said. "I wasn't sure I was going to be doing it in the spring. Being uncomfortable wasn't a great feeling at the time. I talked to Sabo, he said, 'Stick it out, you'll be fine.' I trusted him.

"I could see things were clicking and coming together," Recker added. "I loved it, and I wanted to stick it out. I could see the improvement I was making. In the moment, you think the distances aren't great. But looking back on it, I knew I was making progress. I'm proud of myself for what I've accomplished, but I still want to get better. I was enjoying it, and I enjoyed being around the team."

And like many throwers, improvement comes with repetition and practice. Recker said he finally started to feel comfortable later during the spring of his sophomore outdoor season.

"It felt awful and uncomfortable at first," Recker said. "But coach McCrory (Eastwood assistant Tyler McCrory) kept encouraging me. He kept telling me I was going to grow and get better. He was inviting, a good guy. I liked being around him, so I kept coming back.

"I eventually learned through all of the ups and downs," Recker added. "It's definitely taught me how to be resilient."



The numbers

Recker had personal records of 39-7 in the shot and 98-2 in the discus as a sophomore after starting the season with throws of 33-0 and 81-6 in the discus.

He finished 10th in the shot during the NBC Championships last season with a throw of 40-6. He had PRs last season of 46-3³/₄ in the shot put and 116-9 in the discus. He also competed in the Nike Outdoor Nationals in the hammer throw, finishing 21st with a distance of 128-3³/₄.

"He always wants to get better," McCrory said. "He's very coachable, and he tries to coach the younger guys. That shows he understands what we're talking about. He's usually the last one to leave. He's improved every year because he works hard at practice and in the weight room. He cares. He wants to get better."

"He's improved because of his work ethic outside of the track season," Whitney Recker said. "He spends his summers in the weight room. He does the indoor stuff. That's what makes throwers successful."

This season's goals

In addition to placing in the NBC Championships in the shot, Recker is striving to throw at least 52-0 in the shot, 130-0 in the discus and 136-2 in the hammer. The hammer isn't sanctioned by the Ohio High School Athletic Association.

If Recker meets his goals in the shot and the hammer, he'll be on the school's all-time Top 10 in those events.

Recker already made Eastwood's Top 10 in the indoor shot put and weight throw earlier this year. He threw 43-9 in the shot and 52-7 in the weight throw to rank fourth and eight, respectively, all-time at Eastwood. He also qualified for the Division III state indoor meet in the weight throw where he finished ninth.

"I feel good about where I'm at; indoor gave me a lot of confidence," Recker said. "But I still need to keep working, and I need to keep getting better."

Team leader

Recker was selected as one of the team's captains in a vote of his teammates.

"He's like having another coach, and (Sibbersen) took on that role, too," McCrory said. "When (Sibbersen) left, Recker took over that role. He always wants to help the younger guys get better.

"He's really well liked," McCrory added. "He's personable. He wants to see everyone improve. He always has a lot of positive energy. He cares."

Recker helps organize and start practice. The throwers start daily practices around 4:30 p.m. when McCrory and Whitney Recker arrive.

"I'm a cheerful guy who tries to lift everyone else and be the energy that everyone needs when they need it," Recker said. "I want to be there for others when they need it. The throwers are a tight group and we all encourage and push each other to get better."

What's next

Recker will attend college in the fall, but he isn't sure he'll compete in track and field. He didn't expect to have a chance to throw in college, but once he became successful at it, Sabo started looking for colleges where he could compete.

Recker has a 3.75 grade-point average and will major in diesel technology, which is the study of working on diesel motors in all vehicles.

"I'm excited about it," Recker said. "I'm looking forward to it."

Recker is learning about diesel technology at Penta County Joint Vocational School. He said only a handful of colleges in the country offer the diesel technology major. If he doesn't compete in college, he'll major in diesel technology at Owens Community College.

Recker recently visited Iowa Central Community College.

"I had never thought about (throwing in college) being a possibility," Recker said. "I thought I'd hang up my track shoes and be done with it at the end of the season. But over the winter, Sabo started looking for colleges for me after he asked me if I was interested.

"Iowa Central was really nice," Recker added. "I enjoyed my visit there. I'm trying to weigh the positives and negatives. I like the idea of getting away and being somewhere different for a little bit, and I like the idea of being on the track team, traveling around the country."