

## Miller excels on and off the track for Eagle boys



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### By Kevin Gordon

LUCKEY — Austin Miller's individual goal this season was to qualify for the state high school track and field championships in four events.

The Eastwood High School senior achieved his dream during the Division IV regional.

He qualified for state in the maximum four events — the 400, and the 4x800, 4x200 and 4x400 relays.

Miller is the first Eastwood athlete to qualify for state in four events since Ryan Reiter in 2017.

"It's pretty incredible, seeing the guys we had at state last year, and knowing I'm in the same caliber of them is an incredible feeling," said Miller, who was at Ohio State University's Jesse Owens Stadium last season to watch teammates Andre Lewis, Kevin Lewis, Dayquan Oliver and Jesse Poiry compete in the sport's showcase event.

"It's always been my goal to qualify for state in four events, but I wasn't sure it was possible," Miller added. "Seeing it come to fruition is incredible."

The state championships are Thursday and Friday (June 4 and 5).

The finals of the 4x800 relay are Thursday at 12:45 p.m., followed by the semifinals of the 4x200 at 1:42 p.m., the 400 at 2:15 p.m. and the 4x400 at 3:35 p.m. The finals of the 400, 4x200 and 4x400 are Friday afternoon.

Eastwood's boys qualified for state in eight events in all, and the Eagle girls advanced in eight.

### Regional recap/Looking ahead

Miller and his relay teammates all ran well to qualify for state during last week's regional at Harding Stadium in Marion.

The 4x200 and 4x400 relays both finished fifth to advance to state as automatic qualifiers, and the 4x800 relay was sixth and Miller was sixth in the 400 to earn at-large berths.

The 4x200 relay in the regional final also consisted of sophomore Carsyn Jones, and seniors Zach Mullholand and Collin Brogan. Senior Henry Howard ran for Miller on the 4x200 team during the regional semifinals. Mullholand, Miller, Brogan and Howard ran the 4x400. The 4x800 consisted of Howard, Miller, junior Ben Buehler and junior Casen Henline.

Now, Miller and the Eagles are looking to state.

"My goal is (personal records) across the board," Miller said. "As long as I'm performing at the highest level, I'll be happy. Whatever comes out of that will be an added bonus."

The top eight finishers in each event at the state meet receive All-Ohio recognition and are recognized on the awards stand after each event.



The Ohio High School Athletic Association increased the number of divisions in track and field this season from three to five. The number of qualifiers in each division remained at 18.

Miller ran a PR time of 49.91 in the 400 regional final. The 4x800 relay (8:09.68), 4x200 relay (1:30.55) and the 4x400 relay (3:24.78) all ran season-best times during their regional finals.

Based on regional times, Eastwood is seeded ninth in the 4x400 and 4x200 relays, 11<sup>th</sup> in the 4x800 relay. Miller is seeded 15<sup>th</sup> in the 400.

In the 4x200, Jones, Mullholand, Brogan and Miller ran the second-fastest time in school history earlier this season with a time of 1:30.55.

“Our region is very good,” Miller said of the relays. “We were in the mix and we were competing all the way through. That’s the mentality we have, showing up, and ripping it up and going after it. We have to do that because

we’ll be facing some good competition. I feel good about the way we’re running.”

Miller’s regional time in the 400 is the third fastest in school history.

“I feel good about that, but I still feel like I have some time to drop,” Miller said. “I can’t be upset with that, a PR. I’m excited about that. I’m finally starting to hit the times I thought I could hit, and I still have improvements to make, but I’m seeing what I can really do. I’m excited about running it at state.”

Miller believes attending last season’s state meet will benefit him this weekend. He called Jesse Owens Stadium “the pinnacle” of track and field.

“I have a better idea of what to expect in terms of the atmosphere and the competition,” Miller said. “I can visualize it. I can see myself walking out on the track. I can visualize the race and see that is where I want to be and this is what I want to happen.

“Just seeing the track and the competition really helps me to know this is exactly how I need things to go and how I want things to go,” Miller added. “I’m so glad (Eagle head coach Brian) Sabo took me last year because I have a true vision of the meet.”

Miller qualified for the state indoor meet six times. This year, he finished seventh in the 400, and helped the Eagles finish fourth in the 4x800 relay and eighth in the 4x400 relay. He ranks in the Eagles’ indoor top 10 in three individual events. He owns the school record in the 400 (50.44), and is fourth in the 200 (23.81) and 10<sup>th</sup> in the 800 (2:11.03). Mullholand, Howard, Ben Buehler and Miller are seventh all-time in the 4x400 (3:32.61).

### **Miller evolves as a sprinter**

Miller was a 400 and 800 runner during his first three seasons before emerging as a sprinter this season. He’s also run the 100 and the 200 this season, in addition to the 400, 800 and the 4x800 relay he’s run in the past. He’s also run on the 4x100, 4x200 and 4x400 relays this season.

His off-season training last fall centered more on speed than distance.

“I worked on the faster stuff and I became stronger and gained natural strength from getting older,” Miller said.



The 5-foot-7, 140-pounder enjoyed the 100 and the 200. He's sixth on Eastwood's all-time list in the 200 with a time of 22.46 this season and just missed the Top in the 100 with a time of 11.24 — only .02 off the all-time list. He ran that time in his first 100 April 21 during a dual meet at Fostoria.

"I've always been a 400, 800 guy, but my mentality has changed," Miller said. "I still like those races, but the 100 and 200 have been fun. The 200 is a fun event because it's top-end speed with a little bit of endurance in the end. The 100, it's all power and speed. You don't think a lot about it. You take off and may the best man win. There's no strategy.

"I've always wondered how I would do in those races, and I'm glad I ran them," Miller added. "I thought I could run those times or at least be close. Now, that I have, it was a great feeling."

And his off-season work paid off.

"Austin has always been a talented runner, but the difference this year is his mindset," Eagle assistant coach Laura Buehler said. "He started approaching training and competition differently and we are seeing that in his races. He has a different level of focus this year and it's paying off."

"This year, Austin was highly focused on off-season training," Eastwood assistant coach T.J. Tuttamore said. "He has taken ownership of what he needs as an athlete. He is doing things that directly lead to success not only at practice, but the more important hours outside of practice."

Sabo said the versatile Miller can run anything from the 100 to the 3,200, and all four relays. Miller ran on the Eagles' cross country team for the first time last fall and finished ninth in the Northern Buckeye Conference Championships to earn second-team all-conference honors.

"His ability to run all those races gives us a lot of options, because he's probably the fastest guy on the team," Sabo said.

But Miller said he enjoys the strategy of the distance races.

"The distance events are a little more strategic, and you have to think about those races a little more," Miller said. "But I enjoy all of the races. It's fun to mix it up."

Miller was named the NBC's co-athlete of the year in track and field. In the conference meet, he won the 200 and the 400, and helped Eastwood win 4x400 relay. He also finished second in the 100.

"The NBC has a lot of great athletes, and it was a great honor to be recognized as one of the best," Miller said. "I'm truly grateful to receive that honor."



In the district meet, Miller was second in the 200, second in the 4x800, and third in the 4x200 and the 4x400.



### **Running the relays**

Although Miller is thrilled to qualify for state in the 400, he's even more excited to be part of three state-qualifying relay teams and having all four relay teams at state.

"It's being part of a team; all of those guys are my friends," Miller said of the relays. "It's an extension of our friendship. We hang out away from the track and when we're at the track, we're hanging out, running, pushing each other to get better.

"When you succeed in an individual event, you're happy for yourself," Miller added.

"When the team succeeds, everyone is happy for each other. It builds that family and brotherhood we talk about all of the time."

The Eastwood program highly values the relays.

"The coaches really value the relays," Miller said. "When you're competing for someone else, it adds a whole new level. If you only want it for yourself and the motivation isn't there, then it doesn't impact anyone else. If the motivation isn't there for a relay, you have to tell yourself you're competing for three other guys and that's another aspect of making yourself better. If you get better, the team gets better as well as opening opportunities for everyone else and making each individual better."

Miller's willing to run any leg on any relay, but his favorite is the anchor leg.

"I want the baton in my hand. I like the pressure," he said.

The 4x400 has long been the signature event of the Eastwood program. The Eagles like the event because it requires speed and endurance, and it's the final event of the meet — meaning it's the team's last impression of the meet.

"We love the 4x4; that's our event," Miller said, "Everyone likes to run it."

Sabo designed white jerseys for the 4x400, and those jerseys are only used for special events.

"We love those jerseys," Miller said. "Whenever I take that jersey out of the bag, I feel like I'm ready to roll. It's a mentality when we put it on. We know we have to go out hard for the team."

### **Captain Miller**

Miller is one of the team's captains, selected in a vote of his teammates.

"It's incredible being a captain," Miller said. "When you look back and see of all of the people who have been captains, trying to carry on their legacy, that's something I've looked forward to since my freshman year. I've glad I've had the opportunity to do it for two years now.

"It's a great team, great atmosphere, great coaching," Miller added. "I love everything about this team and this program. It's been exactly everything I've wanted. It's been great to have the opportunity to lead this program."



Miller is popular with his teammates and coaches because he's a genuinely a nice person.

"The big thing is building those relationships and leading by example and trying to show what the right thing is to do," Miller said. "I'm, obviously, not perfect, but I always try to do the right thing. I try to lead by example. One of the big things for me is inclusion and trust. I don't think people will listen or look to you if you don't have trust or a relationship with them. If the only experience they have with you is you yelling at them, it's not going to go very well."

Miller works hard every day, whether it be at practice or in a meet. And he's usually one of the last Eagles to leave practice each day.

"He is an upbeat, positive teammate and is usually always smiling," Laura Buehler said. "He challenges his teammates to be better and the level at which he

is competing is contagious. He puts in extra work, is very social and makes a point to talk to a lot of members of the team. It shows he cares about his own performance as well as his teammates' performances.

"Austin definitely leads by example, but is a more vocal leader as well. He is respectful to everyone and is very good at recruiting others to the sport," Tuttamore said. "When you have someone putting in the work and having success, the other kids see that and usually follow that mentality."

Miller said he's tried to have a relationship with every member of the team. The Eagles have approximately 60 athletes on the team.

"He's a really hard worker, an unbelievable leader who will work hard for you," Sabo said. "Whatever you want him to do, he will do it and probably try to do a couple things on his own. He's a really hard worker, great leader, really cares about the team. He cares about the other kids. He's a good kid. He's a great human being. He puts the team and the other guys first, and then himself. He's a total team guy."

Sabo said the leadership of Miller and Howard, who also is a captain, is one of the major reasons for the team's success this season. The two are opposites, with Sabo saying Miller is "goofy and vibrant" and Howard is "reserved and analytical."

"They're my guys," Sabo said. "They'll do anything you ask. They're great leaders.

They're workers. You like being around them. You like hanging out with them. They leave big shoes to fill. They're very similar in terms of work ethic, mentality in terms of how they race. They'll race for the team. They'll never cheat a race. They'll never cheat the team. They're super solid leaders. They're be sorely missed from multiple things and what they do for our program."

"Those guys are selfless," Sabo added. "They're anything for the team first, even if it means I suffer a little bit. Those things are often mentored at home, and they both have great parents. They're very selfless."



### **All in the family**

Miller comes from an athletic family. His dad, Pat Miller, was a standout at Bowling Green State University and DeKalb High School in Waterloo, Ind., located approximately 90 minutes west of BGSU.

Pat Miller still holds the BGSU indoor record in the 4x400 relay set in 1997 and the BGSU outdoor record in the sprint medley relay set in 2000. He also ranks in the Falcon all-time Top 10 indoor list in the 800. When Pat Miller graduated from DeKalb in 1996, he held the school record in the 400 at 49.3 and the state record in the 4x800. He was part of a team that ran 7:53. He qualified for Indiana's state meet twice, and won the state championship in the 4x800 relay in 1996.

His mom, Christy, was a member of Eastwood's 1993 state championship volleyball team. She ran cross country as a senior and is now an avid runner.

"It's been amazing, the expertise and the experiences he had in college and beyond," Austin Miller said of his dad, who helps coach the Eagle distance runners and remains an avid runner today.

"Having that kind of base has given me a better mentality," Austin Miller said. "Having him there and supporting me has been fantastic. He's truly a role model in my life. He's taught me about passion for track. We talk about track every night, and hard work is something he's taught me from day one."

Austin said his dad has done a great job of balancing the roles of being a coach and a father.

"There's the coach side where he's coaching everyone," Austin Miller said. "Then, the dad where he's pouring into me and supporting me through everything and helping me to be the best I can be. He'll say this is coming from your dad, not your coach, and he'll give me some advice or talk about an upcoming race. It's cool to see his different perspectives."

And, of course, the Millers enjoy talking trash.

"I tell him I'm going to beat his time for this or that," Austin Miller said. Sometimes, I do and a lot of times I don't, but the times we trash talk each other are really special."

### **What's next**

Miller will attend the University of Mount Union where he'll compete on the track team. He's expecting to primarily run the 400.



Photo Credit: Scott Sorg, Eastwood AD

When I was there, it felt like home and it had an atmosphere similar to Eastwood which I really liked,” Miller said. “They had great academics. They have a lot of FCA (Fellowship of Christian Athletes) options, and a church in the middle of campus.”

Miller visited Mount Union four times before committing to the school in April.

“When I visited there, it was always some place I wanted to go back to,” Miller said. “It was somewhere I wanted to keep attending. I’m very excited to be going back there in the fall.”

Miller contacted the Mount Union track program last summer by completing its recruiting questionnaire. He’ll be joined at Mount Union by

classmate and pole vaulter Cullen Shank.

“It’s always been at the top of the list. I wasn’t sure if I wanted to go there, but I kept wanting to go back,” Miller added. “I was always like I can’t wait to get back there. Well, in order to go back there, I have to commit. Once I visited, I realized it was special.”

Miller, who has a 4.0 grade point average, is planning on majoring in business management and pre law. His goal is to become a business attorney, although he’s not sure on what area of business law he might specialize in.

“They have a great track program and great academics, and the culture felt like home,” Miller said.

At Eastwood, Miller also is a member of FCA, Student Council, Key Club, vice-president of the National Honor Society, Senior Executive Council and the Robotics Team.

In addition to running cross country last fall and earning second-team All-NBC honors in that sport, he played on the Eagles’ soccer team for all four seasons. He earned first-team All-NBC honors and honorable-mention all-district honors in soccer.

“God has blessed me with some great opportunities, including the chance to continue running in college,” Miller said. “He’s blessed me in a lot of aspects of my life.”



## STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS INFORMATION

<https://www.ohsaa.org/Sports-Tournaments/Track-Field/2026-Track-and-Field/2026-Track-Field-State-Coverage>

<https://ohsaaweb.blob.core.windows.net/files/Sports/Track-Field/2026/2026InformationPacket.pdf>