

Sabo, Newsome and Emch advance to state

By Kevin Gordon

LEXINGTON — Julia Sabo and Olivia Newsome are returning to the state high school track and field championships.

And Leah Emch is headed to her sport's showcase event for the first time.

Sabo tied for first place in the pole vault to qualify for state, and Newsome and Emch received at-large berths during Saturday's Division II regional meet at Lexington High School.

Newsome, in the discus, and Emch, in the 3,200, both finished fifth in their events, with Emch running the second-fastest time in Eastwood history during her race.

The top four finishers in each event at the regional qualified for state, along with two at-large berths. The at-large berths went to the next two finishers with the best time/height/distance, regardless of regional.

The state meet is Friday and Saturday at Ohio State University's Jesse Owens Stadium.



Sabo ties for first in pole vault

Sabo, a senior, earned her third consecutive trip to state by tying Tallmadge junior Kate Archer for first place in the pole vault with a jump of 11-4.

Heath senior Allie Dunlap also cleared 11-4, but she finished third, based on misses.

Sabo and Archer both made 11-4 on their first attempt, but Dunlap cleared the height on her third and final attempt.

The top eight finishers in each event also are recognized on the awards stand.

"It feels good to qualify for state," Sabo said. "It's a lot less stress to know I'm going to state. It's a big achievement for me. I'm happy to be going back to state and to be a regional champion is nice. It shows I'm going in the right direction."

After Dunlap was eliminated on misses, Sabo and Archer both missed all three attempts at 11-8. They then went to a jumpoff — the pole vault's version of overtime. Both received a fourth attempt at 11-8, but both missed.

Sabo and Archer then were going to receive another attempt at 11-4 in an effort to break the tie, but they decided to share first place instead.

"We were out of jumps and we were tired, so we decided to share it," said Sabo, who jumped 10 times in the meet. Archer vaulted nine times.

The pole vault competition was a long one, lasting until the 300 hurdles final was on the track. The event was held in windy and warm conditions.

The top seven finishers all jumped 10-8 or higher, including the top five at 11-0 or better. Sabo, Dunlap and Archer all qualified for state last season. Dunlap finished ninth, while Sabo was 11th and Archer finished 12th.

“The competition here was really good,” Sabo said.

Eastwood sophomore Kyrie Henline finished tied for 11th in the pole vault, clearing 9-0. Her best vault of 10-0 this season tied for the fourth-best height in Eastwood history.

“It was a really cool experience to be here,” Henline said. “I’ve improved so much this year, and I can see the progress. Today was mostly stress. It was definitely a mental challenge. I’m excited about next year, and I want to get back here, so I can do better than I did today.”



Newsome places fifth in discus

Newsome earned an at-large berth to state in the discus for the second straight season. The senior’s best throw measured 124-6. She also finished fifth in the regional last season.

Defending state and regional champion Morgan Hallett, a junior at Norton, won the regional with a throw of 162-1 to break her meet record of 157-1 last year. A throw of 129-7 was needed to make the top four.

“It wasn’t easy, but I’m headed to state and that feels good,” Newsome said. “It was the same as last year, so at least I knew what it was like to be in fifth place. I kept battling to move up or stay in fifth because our region is so tough. Being in the fifth and sixth spots here is still really good.”

Newsome, her teammates and her coaches all started to check their phones for the results of the three other regionals after Newsome finished throwing to determine if she had advanced. And

she didn’t have to wait very long.

“It was pretty much right away I found out I had qualified,” Newsome said. “Even if I didn’t qualify, I was happy with today because I threw better than I had been throwing in the last couple of meets.”

Newsome’s six throws ranged from 118-10 to 124-6.

“I’m really happy with today because I was very consistent,” Newsome said. “I didn’t foul once. They were all over 118 and between 118-124. Consistency shows you can do better because you’re consistently throwing these distances, so I know I can improve.”

Emch finishes fifth in 3,200, nears school record

Emch finished fifth in the 3,200 in 11:32.56 — less than seven seconds shy of Sarah Lohrbach’s school record of 11:25.98 in 1998. The sophomore’s time was almost a three-second personal record, beating her best earlier this season of 11:35.11, which was the third-fastest time in Eastwood history.

Junior teammate Z Ramsey was 15th in the 3,200 with a time of 12:47.87.



“Going to state is really satisfying,” Emch said. “I’m really happy, but it was hard waiting to find out if I had made it.”

Lexington freshman Brailey Slone edged Emch for fourth place by less than a second (0.99), forcing Emch to wait to see the results of the other three regionals to determine if she had earned one of the at-large berths. Shelby senior Kayla Gonzales won the race in 11:05.62 after winning the 1,600 earlier in the meet with a time of 5:02.71.

“I’m excited because I was really worried about making it to state,” Emch said. “Being fifth, I knew I had a chance, but you never know. I’m pretty happy with the way I ran, and it ended up being a good time.”

Ramsey also qualified for the regional in the 1,600, but she elected not to run that race in order to focus on the 3,200.

“My race was okay,” Ramsey said. “I wasn’t expecting much because I’ve been hurt.”

Ramsey had limited practice time in the week leading up to the regional because of pain in her leg. She said she was only at “75 percent” for the regional.

“I’m just glad I was able to run,” Ramsey said. “I knew, with my leg, I wouldn’t be able to PR.”

Qualifying for the regional in two events completed a successful season for Ramsey.

“Overall, the season was exactly what I wanted,” Ramsey said. “I PRd in both the (1,600) and the (3,200). I was really scared I wasn’t going to PR in either race this season, and I was going to run the same times, but I PRd in both. I’ll be a lot more confident going into next season.”



Sponaugle finishes 7th in 1,600

Eagle sophomore Haley Sponaugle finished seventh in the 1,600 with a time of 5:32.55 — just off her PR of 5:28.37. Her PR is the sixth-fastest time in school history.

“I went out hard. My first lap was the fastest it’s ever been,” Sponaugle said. “I knew going in, I wanted to be in the pack and not too far behind. I was okay with my time. The first 800 was about where I wanted it. My time wasn’t a PR, but I wanted to place (top eight) and I did that.”

The fourth-place finisher had a time of 5:21.50.

“I’m ecstatic with the season,” Sponaugle said. “I didn’t PR in the (3,200), but I PRd in every other event. Now,

I want to make my senior year my best year. I feel really confident going into next season.”

Firsdon runs PR in the 800

Eastwood senior Kayden Firsdon ran a PR in the 800. She finished 12th in 2:27.55 — easily beating her previous best earlier this season of 2:29.93.

“I tried to go out hard, and I didn’t want to finish last like I did last year,” Firsdon said. “This year, I told myself losing hurts more, so I told myself to go out with a bang because this is my last race.”

Lexington junior Elyana Weaver won the 800 in 2:17.52 and a time of 2:19.58 was needed to make the top four.

“I went into the race confident,” Firsdon said. “I was ready to go out hard. It felt really good, too. I was really proud of myself for the way I ran.”

LEXINGTON REGIONAL INFORMATION/RESULTS

<https://oh.milesplit.com/meets/550111-ohsaa-division-2-region-6-lexington-2023>

STATE MEET QUALIFIERS/HEAT AND FLIGHT ASSIGNMENTS/RESULTS

<https://www.baumspage.com/ohsaa/tf/2023/index.htm>

STATE MEET INFORMATION PAGE

(INCLUDING SCHEDULE, TICKETS, PARKING AND FACILITY DIAGRAM)

<https://www.ohsaa.org/Sports-Tournaments/Track-Field/2023-Track-and-Field/2023-State-Tournament-Coverage>