

Middle school boys finish second, girls third in Eastwood Relays

By Kevin Gordon

LUCKEY — Eastwood Middle School's boys and girls track and field teams believe they're heading in the right direction.

The Eagles' latest step forward came Friday night during the Eastwood Relays.

The boys finished second and the girls were third in the seven-team meet that featured excellent competition, especially from Bellevue and Oak Harbor.

The boys won five of the 13 events and scored 100 points to finish only four points behind first-place Oak Harbor. Bellevue was third with 72.

"They came out with tremendous energy," Eastwood coach Lucas Hoodlebrink said of the boys team. "The energy they showed was better than they've had all year. They know the Eastwood Relays are a big meet for us, and they know a lot of family and a lot of fans are here, so they really came out and competed well. It showed in every event. We had a lot of PRs (personal records) today. I couldn't be any happier with how they performed."

Bellevue won the girls meet with 100 points, followed by Oak Harbor with 86 and Eastwood with 79. The Eagles won two events.

"They performed well," Hoodlebrink said. "The field events today were spectacular, and then we performed well in the running events. They did everything we asked them to do."

The five field events were scored as relays. Schools entered three athletes in each field event, with the combined height or distance being used for the team finish. No team points were awarded for the individual finishes in the field events.

The top six finishers in all 13 events scored team points.

"The most important thing right now is the kids are starting to love track," Eagle coach Nathan Howard said. "You saw it tonight. At first, they're like track is this sport they think they can do. Now, they're loving the sport ... with how they've come together, the enthusiasm, the fun they're having. You can see it on their faces. I love that part of it."

Hoodlebrink said the Eagles have come together as a team during the season. The athletes, when they're not competing, are cheering their teammates on in other events.

The last event to finish Friday was the boys pole vault where Jack Moorman, Hayden Hoelter and Kevin Lewis finished first with a combined height of 24-0. All three jumped 8-0 to finish in a three-way tie for second individually.

Moorman, Hoelter and Lewis were cheered on by all of their boys and girls teammates. Those teammates headed to the pole vault area after they filled the inside of the track to cheer on their teammates competing in the final running event, the 4x400 relay.

"We've become more of a team," Hoodlebrink said. "Everyone is running around cheering each other on. That's great to see."

Eastwood has faced a challenging season this spring after last season was canceled, the result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This season's eighth-graders barely had a week of practice as seventh-graders before last season was halted.

The last time Eastwood had a meet was in 2019 when this season's team members were in the fifth and sixth grades.

"It's been a lot of growth and patience this year," Howard said. "We emphasize this is where you're starting, this is where you want to be in two weeks, this is where you want to be in four weeks, six weeks."

Howard said one of the best examples of that is the boys and girls pole vault.

"They didn't know anything about it since it was new," Howard said. "Now, we have the top six vaults in the NBC, just because they like doing it. They like practicing. They want to get better. "We focus on getting better, no matter what your event is, not what your ability is," Howard added. "Let's focus on getting better every week. If you're a 6-foot vaulter, let's go 6-6. You don't have to go 8-0, 9-0. Let's just get better. The track emphasis on PRs is huge for the growth emphasis of these kids."

Howard and Hoodlebrink said the team's six coaches have used "trial and error" to figure out the best events for each athlete. Athletes are limited to three events in a meet, but they can do more than that during practice.

"We try to let them pick their events to a degree, but we'll identify kids and tell them we think you'd be really good at this," Howard said, adding the hurdles are one specialty the coaches often have to suggest to the athletes.

"Everyone thinks that is a dangerous event," Howard added. "But you start off with real low hurdles, the easy stuff, and build some confidence doing it. Next thing, they know, they've got it."

Howard and Hoodlebrink said the Eagles have been helped by their large coaching staff. The large staff allows for more individualized instruction, and every running and field event area to be covered.

The Eagles have approximately 70 athletes this season, 40 boys and 30 girls.

"We've got kids who can legitimately do five or six technique events right now which not many middle school teams can do," Howard said. "It's a luxury to have six coaches on a middle school team. It's huge to have kids be able to try so many different events."

The Eagles have three dual meets remaining before they host the Northern Buckeye Conference Championships May 14. They host Elmwood Monday, and visit Fostoria Wednesday and Otsego May 10.

"We can still get better, but we're taking the right steps to getting better," Howard said. "The boys are confident with that they're doing in terms of the NBC. The girls are going to have a tight competition. The girls are thin in a lot of areas, but they're working hard and getting better. If we can put the right group together, we'll have a pretty good shot there, too."

EASTWOOD RELAYS

Boys recap

Eastwood finished no lower than fourth in every event, including four second-place finishes and two third-place finishes.

The Eagles' other winners were:

- Discus, team of Braden Dix, Hunter Lauer and Jacob Johnson, combined distance of 286-3.
- Long jump, team of Kevin Lewis, Dayquan Oliver and Wyatt Oestreich, combined distance of 49-9. Lewis was first individually with a distance of 17-5½, while Oliver was second at 17-¾.
- 4x110 shuttle hurdles, team of Jesse Poiry, Drew Luidhardt, Zachary Mullholand and Andre Lewis, 72.05.

- 1,600 sprint medley (200-200-400-800), team of Logan Perry, Jason Young, Mullholand and Hoelter, 4:22.44.
- Lauer was first individually in the shot put, throwing 37-4.
- Oliver was second individually in the high jump, going 5-2.

Girls recap

Eastwood also six second-place finishes and one third-place finish.

The Eagles' winners were:

- High jump, team of Addison Hartman, Lilly Mullholand and Lily Hanneman, combined height of 12-6. Hartman tied for first individually, jumping 4-6.
- 800 sprint medley (100-100-200-400), team of Corrine Genson, Savannah Stephens, Jordan Jensen and Mullholand, 2:07.99.
- Kyrie Henline tied for first individually in the pole vault, clearing 8-0.
- Hartman was first individually in the discus with a throw of 91-8 and second in the long jump with a distance of 14-6.

Complete results of the meet are available at:

<https://www.baumspage.com/trackms/eastwood/rel/2021/Results.pdf>