

Boys 4x400 relay, Lauer, Shank have All-Ohio finishes



By Kevin Gordon

COLUMBUS — Eastwood High School's boys track and field team was perfect Friday.

The Eagles competed in three events during the final day of the Division IV state championships, and they had All-Ohio finishes in all three at Ohio State University's Jesse Owens Stadium.

The 4x400 relay team of Zach Mullholand, Austin Miller, Collin Brogan and Henry Howard finished fourth, Hunter Lauer was fifth in the discus, and Cullen Shank tied for seventh in the pole vault.

The top eight finishers in each event received all-state honors and were recognized on the awards podium

after their event.

"A super, solid way to finish the season," Eastwood head coach Brian Sabo said. "We started off well. It's kind of the mantra of our team. The field events get us going and then the running events follow."

Lauer and Shank both competed at 9:30 a.m., and the 4x400 relay team ran at 4 p.m.

All six of the Eagles who competed Friday were seniors, and all six were team captains.

"We had a really, really solid day of effort and great mindsets," Sabo said. "They came ready to compete. That's what I appreciate about all of the seniors who competed today and that's what I'll miss the most about them."



The Eagles scored 10½ points to finish 21st in the team standings. Margaretta won the state championship with 44 points, edging runner-up Gates Mills Gilmour Academy by four points. A total of 59 teams scored at least one point in the meet. The top eight finishers in each event scored team points with the points awarded on a 10-8-6-5-4-3-2-1 basis.

4x400 relay finishes fourth

The Eagles' 4x400 relay team of Mullholand, Miller, Brogan and Howard finished in 3:25.15 as Howard held off Wayne Trace by .01 and North Adams by .50 for fourth place.

Miami East won the relay in 3:20.32, while Bluffton was second in 3:24.69 and Lakota was third in 3:24.73.

"It's really cool we finished fourth in the state after being seeded ninth," Mullholand said. "I'm ecstatic, really happy about that. I'm really happy I was able to get in with this team because of all of the hard work we put in. That hard work finally paid off. It was amazing day.



Photo credit: Jeremy Robinson

“Going into the race, we wanted it more than anyone else out there,” Mullholand added. “We all went out and ripped the first two laps and finished the race strong.”

The Eagles qualified for the finals Thursday by running the eighth-fastest time of the 18 state qualifiers during the semifinals. Eastwood had a time of 3:25.77, less than a second off its season best of 3:24.70.

“I told them splits were irrelevant,” Sabo said of the finals. “Today was about a want, a want to be on the awards stand. This is about a want to run for your brother. This is about wearing the 4x4 jersey and running the premier event at Eastwood in the state finals. That’s what it’s about. The times will take care of themselves. They just attacked.”

The top two finishers in each semifinal and the next

five fastest times, regardless of heat, advanced to the finals.

“We had a good tailwind coming off the curve and we took it out as hard we could to put ourselves in a good spot,” Miller said. “We used that to our advantage to get ourselves in the mix and then we went from there.”

“We kept a positive mindset and ran our best; that’s what we did and that got us the results we couldn’t have imagined today,” Brogan said.

The fourth-place finish enabled Brogan, Howard, Miller and Mullholand to bounce back from difficult races Thursday.

The 4x800 relay team of Miller, junior Ben Buehler, Howard and junior Casen Henline finished 17th in 8:23.06.

The 4x200 and 4x100 relay teams both did not qualify for the finals.

The 4x200 team of sophomore Carsyn Jones, Mullholand, Brogan and Miller had a time of 1:31.18, the 12th fastest of the semifinalists.

The 4x100 team of Brogan, Jones, sophomore Trace Johnson and Mullholand had a time of 44.43, the 16th fastest of the semifinalists.

“We knew we still had one race left after Thursday, and we were going to give our best and go out hard,” Brogan said. “We put in the work during the winter and during the season. (Howard) put us through some horrible workouts, so we knew when we got to that last 100 of the 4x400, we treated it like a workout and pushed ourselves to the finish that we got. We’re very happy.”

The 4x400 is the signature event for the Eastwood program. The Eagles love the race because it’s the final event of the meet, meaning it’s the final impression of the meet, and because the race requires speed and endurance.

The tradition was started by retired head coach Gary White and continued by Sabo, who was White’s long-time assistant coach.

Sabo designed white jerseys for his 4x400 teams, only to be worn in special events. Those white jerseys were worn Friday. White’s runners received 4x400 themed baseball camps.

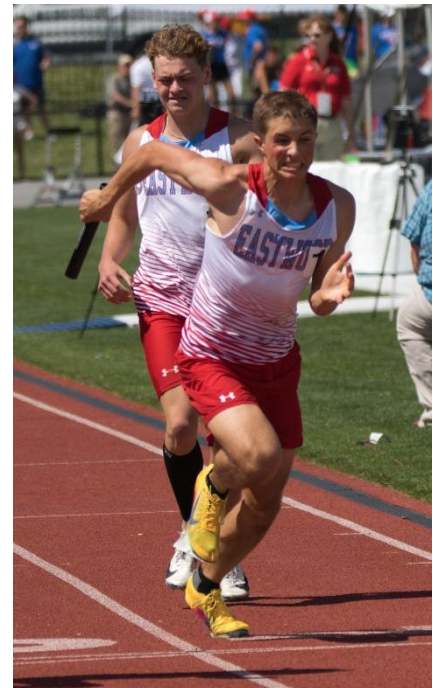


Photo credit: Jeremy Robinson

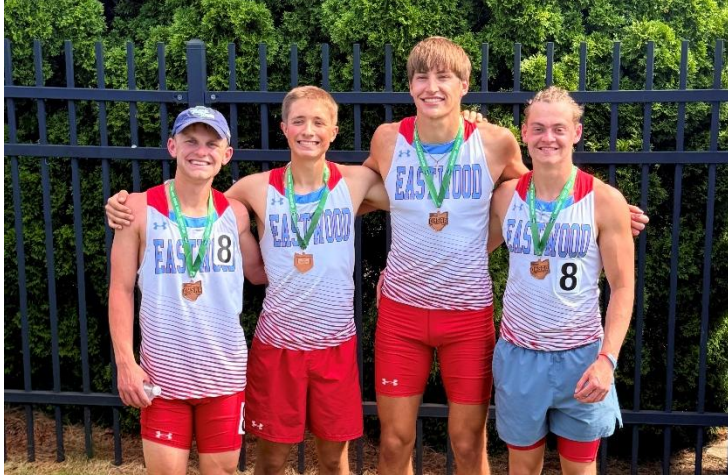


Photo credit: Jami Mullholand

Since 2003, the Eagles have qualified for state 12 times in the 4x400, but this season's 4x400 trip to state was Eastwood's first since 2018. They've finished in the top eight 10 times, including state championships in 2014 and 2016, second-place finishes in 2003 and 2017, and fourth-places Friday and in 2009.

Current Eagle assistant coach Jason Faykosh ran on the fourth-place team in 2009.

"It's exciting," Howard said. "Carrying on a legacy like that, it's an honor to be on the podium."

Miller was a four-event state qualifier. He also qualified in the 400, but elected not to compete in that race to be fresher for the 4x400 relay.

Lauer matches PR for fifth in discus

Lauer equaled his personal record with a throw of 171-6 to finish fifth in the discus. He PR'd six times in the discus this season, most recently April 24 at the Eastwood Relays where he also threw 171-6. He threw 170-9 to win a Northern Buckeye Conference championship May 15.

"It's an amazing feeling. I've been looking for that all season," Lauer said of placing and throwing a PR at state. "That was my goal. I'm so excited with the way I threw and being on the podium. Today was one of the best days I've ever had in the discus. I was really excited to see that (a PR)."

The 6-foot-2, 240-pounder launched his throw of 171-6 on his first attempt of the competition, and he was third going into the finals. Lauer was passed by two throwers in the finals.

The 18 state qualifiers each received three throws during the preliminaries, with the top nine distances advancing to the finals. The athletes then received three more throws in the finals in an attempt to improve their distance.

"My practices this week leading up to the meet weren't the greatest, but I tried to push that out of my head because I knew all of the practices I had this year prepared me for today," Lauer said.

"My warmups were really good and that put me in the right headspace for that first throw. Once I got that first throw in, I was a lot less stressed. I was ready to go after it."

Lauer's PR ranks fourth in Eagle history.

"We saw the best of Hunter Lauer today," Eastwood assistant coach Colton Ickes said.

"It was a great day," Eagle assistant coach Tyler McCrory said. "He really went after it. He competed against some of really good competition and was up for the challenge."

Gilmour Academy senior Ethan Stein won with a throw of 191-0, followed by Liberty Center senior Hunter Spangler 178-8, LaBrae junior Matthew Kujala 177-9 and Margaretta sophomore Jace Berg 175-10. A throw of 164-1 or better was needed to make the finals and a throw of 166-4 was needed to be on the podium.



Photo credit: Jeremy Robinson



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“Lauer PRd, what a great time to do it, especially after he had a rough first day,” Sabo said. “He turned it right around and had a great second day.”

Lauer’s fifth-place finish came less than 24 hours after he had a disappointing performance Thursday in the shot put where he finished 12th with a throw of 51-5½. His PR of 54-6 earlier this season is the fifth-best throw in school history. He PRd four times in the shot this season.

“I took a little bit of time to be upset about it, and then I tried to push it out of my head,” Lauer said. “I was with the team (Thursday) night and we had some fun, and that helped me get over it a little. I went to bed early and was here early this morning with the right mindset, and that helped me have a big day.”

Lauer warmed up well for the discus, and then PRd on his initial attempt.

“That was huge, and that really set the tone for the day,” McCrory said of Lauer’s first throw in the discus.

“That was the most important thing of the day, to come out and have a big throw because then we’re not out chasing,” Ickes said. “You can go after bigger throws.”

Lauer fouled on two monster throws during the finals. Both throws landed in the 180 range, but both were outside of the right sector line.

At state, Lauer was seeded fourth in the discus and eighth in the shot.

“The shot didn’t go the greatest, but once I got that first mark in, that really helps me get less stressed,” Lauer said. “With that first throw, it really helped me to bounce back,

“I’m much more confident in the discus,” Lauer added. “I’ve been very consistent in the discus, but not so much in the shot. But that helps me know, even if I have a bad practice or a few bad practices, I’ve been very consistent which helps ease my nerves coming into the competition. That helped me get rid of the nerves. The amount of work and practices I’ve put in all year helped me change my mindset through the year, to focus on myself, be less nervous; that’s what led to my being here today.”



Photo credit: Jeremy Robinson

Shank ties for seventh in pole vault

Shank tied for seventh in the pole vault with a height of 13-6. The senior cleared the opening height of 13-0 and 13-6 on his first attempt before missing all three attempts at 14-0.

“I’m super happy with the way it went. It wasn’t the height I wanted. I wanted 14-0 to end the year on, but I can’t argue with a podium position,” said Shank, who was in a five-way for tie eighth place in the seeding for the state meet. “I knew I had to do everything right that I could control to get on the podium, and I did that.”

A vault of 14-0 would have been a season-best for Shank, who cleared 13-8 earlier this season. His PR of 14-1 came as a sophomore. The height remains sixth best in Eastwood history.

“Shank had a good day,” Sabo said. “He jumped really well.”



Photo credit: Nick Huenefeld - Instagram

Shank and Versailles junior Kade Schwartz both jumped 13-6, and had the same number of misses. The ninth- and 10th-place vaulters also cleared 13-6, but had more misses. Chesapeake senior Corey Davis won with a height of 16-0, and the next five finishers all jumped at least 14-0.

By clearing 13-0 and 13-6 on his first attempt, Shank put himself in a position to win tiebreakers with fewer misses. “That was super important. I knew if I didn’t do that, there was a very low chance of me getting on the podium,” Shank said, “Once I cleared the first bar on my first attempt, I was able to relax. I was going to be happy, no matter how the day I went, unless I no heighted. I held myself to that standard. After I cleared that first bar, I was ready to compete and that second bar confirmed it.”

Shank was competing at state for the first time, although he qualified for the regional four times.

“The mental game has been rough,” Shank said. “I needed to keep things positive and know I belonged here. I told

myself I belonged here and visualized myself on that runway. I knew if I did those things, I could do great things. I was in a really good mindset today.”

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