

Emch lowers her school 3,200 record in 9th-place finish; Gallant breaks her seated 100 record



All photo credits: Danielle DeFalco

By Kevin Gordon

DAYTON — Leah Emch fashioned a record-breaking performance during the state high school track and field championships Saturday afternoon.

The Eastwood junior broke her school record in the 3,200 during the Division II meet at Welcome Stadium.

Emch ran a time of 11:24.01 to break her record of 11:24.98 on the way to a second-place finish during the regional meet May 25 at Lexington High School.

The record time at state, however, produced a bittersweet result for Emch, who finished ninth and missed a spot on the awards stand by only one place and 5.56 seconds. The top eight finishers in each event at state are recognized with medals and a spot on the awards stand.

Those eight also earn All-Ohio recognition.

“That was hard to take, not making the podium,” Emch said. “I knew that was achievable, and I came so close.”

Also for the Eagles, Jenna Gallant broke her

school record in the seated 100 and competed in the seated shot put Friday. The sophomore had a time of 38.85 in the 100, although she didn’t advance to the finals. She finished ninth in the shot with a throw of 9-2³/₄.

Emch lowers Eastwood record in 3,200

Emch ran a strong race to break the Eastwood record in the 3,200 for the second time in a week.

“Leah has a lot to be proud of with the race today,” Eastwood Head Coach Nathan Howard said. “She went out really well, competed early in the race. She fell off a little bit in the middle, but to PR at the state meet, she has a lot to be proud of. We’re really proud of her, too.”

Emch claimed ninth place when she passed Marengo Highland senior Camryn Miller with only 10 meters to go. Miller led Emch by just under five seconds with 400 meters to go. Emch finished .76 of a second ahead of Miller.

“My last lap is always pretty strong, and I could see her ahead of me,” Emch said. “I knew it was going to be really close at the finish. I didn’t know if I could catch her because she was so far ahead of me. I was able to get her in the end. My kick always surprises me, but I got her in the end.”



Emch was in eighth place and in the lead pack after the first half of the eight-lap race. The 3,200 is the metric version of the two-mile. “I put myself out there the first mile,” Emch said. “Normally, I wouldn’t have done that. It was nice to go out with that first mile, but the second mile was a little off. I boxed myself in and didn’t compete very well that last mile. But I still had a (personal record). “They went out at my pace,” Emch added. “I’ve run against a lot of

these girls many times before in cross country and a few times in track. I knew what to expect. I knew we were going to go out fast. It was a nice, comfortable pace. I knew they were going to pick up the pace during the last mile, and I kept up with them for a while.”

Emch was the ninth seed at state, based on regional times. Her regional time broke Eastwood’s 26-year-old record of 11:25.98 set by Sarah Lohrbach.

“It was nice to break the school record again,” Emch said. “I’m glad I ran faster than last week.”

Athens sophomore Sophia Szolosi won the race in 10:59.61 after finishing second last season. Huron freshman Rylie Towns was second in 11:04.22, and Oakwood sophomore Delaney Cahill was third in 11:13.17. A time of 11:18.45 or better was needed to make the podium.

“It was the most consistent race of her career,” said Eagle Assistant Coach T.J. Tuttamore, who works with the team’s distance runners. “I’m most proud of how she overcame her emotions today, similar to last year. She got really emotional, but kept it under control when she got to the starting line.

“She did what she had to do and put herself in the mix,” Tuttamore added. “She looked really good. It was a nice way to finish the season.”

Emch was running at state in the 3,200 for the second straight season. She finished 12th last season in 11:48.76 — a time that would have placed her 16th this season.

“The competition was so much better this year,” Emch said. “It was really good because it pushes you to be better. All of the girls are really nice. I know they work hard. It was a fun race.”

Fourteen of the 18 state qualifiers this season are eligible to return next season, including seven of the top nine finishers.

Emch also is a three-time state cross country qualifier, earning Division II All-Ohio honors for finishing in the Top 25 as a sophomore and as a junior. She was 14th at state both seasons.

“Knowing I can put myself out there at the start of the race, I need to work on maintaining my fourth, fifth and sixth laps because my seventh and eighth laps are usually good,” Emch said. “I definitely want to get keep getting better, so I can have another chance to get back here and place even higher.”



Gallant breaks seated 100 record, competes in the shot

Gallant's time of 38.85 lowered her Eastwood record of 39.05 set May 6 during Eastwood's junior varsity invitational.

The 10 state qualifiers were divided into two semifinals, with eight athletes qualifying for the finals.

"I had a PR, so I felt good about that," Gallant said. "That gave me a little bit of a boost after I didn't PR in the shot. I felt really good after the

(100)."

Gallant threw the shot in the afternoon and then competed in the 100 at night.

"I felt like I had a chance at a PR in the 100 today," Gallant said. "Competing with other seated athletes gave me a different feeling. The competition really helped."

She competed in the 100 for the first time this season after throwing the shot last season. Her first race resulted in a time of 40.14 to set the Eastwood record, and she lowered the record twice after that. Her best time entering the state meet was 39.05, and her second-best time was 39.94.

"I felt really good about the way the 100 went this year," Gallant said. "I'm glad I gave it a try. I always thought it looked fun, so I decided to do it. The first time I tried it, I hated it. The second time I tried, it, it was okay. But I gradually learned to like it."

Gallant's best throw in the shot came on her first attempt. Her second throw was 9- $\frac{1}{4}$, and her final two throws both went 8- $\frac{3}{4}$.

Massillon Jackson sophomore Abigail LaPorte won the shot with a throw of 18- $\frac{3}{4}$, edging runner-up and Glen Oak junior Elena Knowles by two inches. Streetsboro senior Milena Sobie was third at 18- $\frac{1}{2}$.

"I definitely wanted to throw better," Gallant said.

Gallant extended her school record from 8- $\frac{9}{4}$ to 9- $\frac{6}{2}$ this season, breaking the school record four times.

"I'm happy with the way the shot went this season," Gallant said.

Her goal in the shot next season is to throw at least 10-0, but she wasn't sure about a goal for the 100.

"I just want to keep improving in both," Gallant said.

Gallant also qualified for state last season in the shot, finishing 14th with a distance of 8- $\frac{3}{4}$.

"I felt more confident at state this year, having been here last year," Gallant said.



Gallant advanced to state by hitting qualifying standards earlier this season. The qualifying standards are 7-0 in the shot put and 45.0 in the 100.

“I’m really happy she ended the season with a PR,” Howard said. “She didn’t have the performance she wanted in the shot, but she did well in the 100. I’m proud of her for not letting that affect her race in the 100, especially with it being her first year. She learned a lot, and we’re looking forward to what she can do next year.”

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