

PRs, Ava Kiefer's school record highlight girls' Eastwood Relays championship



By Kevin Gordon

LUCKEY — Hannah Friend started Eastwood's day with a personal record on her first attempt in the discus Friday.

The Eagles kept the PRs and season bests coming for 5½ more hours.

They parlayed the results into a second-place finish in the Eastwood Relays.

Eastwood won four events and scored 105 points to finish as the runner-up to

Liberty-Benton with 124 in the 10-team meet. Findlay was third with 75, followed by Anthony Wayne with 67 and Bowling Green with 57.

Junior Ava Kiefer won the hammer throw with a school-record effort, and combined with Friend, a senior, and sophomore Olivia Newsome to win the discus and the shot put. The Eagles' 4x800 team of sophomore Talia Baum, freshman Amelia Ward, junior Maisy Stevenson and freshman Avery Bowman also finished first.

Eastwood finished the meet with 11 PRs and eight season bests.

"Our team performed beautifully, just awesome. Hearing the jingles of everyone's medals was great," said Friend, who is one of Eastwood's captains.

The top eight finishers in each event scored team points, with the top five in each event earning medals.

Most of the athletes wear their medals when they're not competing since the medals are awarded right after each event. The sound of the medals clanking as the athletes walk around is one of the many perks offered by the meet.

Eastwood, defending Blanchard Valley Champion Liberty-Benton, Napoleon and Cardinal Stritch were the non-Division I schools in the meet. Eastwood, L-B and Napoleon compete in Division II, although L-B was a long-time power in Division III before moving up.

"With the group we went against tonight, we'll take second place," Eastwood head coach Nikki Sabo said. "I'm very proud of the team."

Eastwood finished second in the combined team standings, determined by the scores of the girls and boys teams from each school. L-B won the combined championship with 207 points, while Eastwood was the runner-up with 176 and Findlay was third with 174.

"This is why we embrace the Eastwood family," Eastwood boys head coach Brian Sabo said. "Our girls really performed well."

The Eagles scored in all 17 events, including two second-place finishes, four third-places, two fourth-place finishes and two fifth-place finishes.

The pole vault, discus, shot put, high jump and long jump were scored as relays. Each school entered three athletes in those events, with the combined distance or height of the three determining the placings.



Throwers rule, more field events

Kiefer won the hammer throw with a distance of 124-4 to break the Eagle record of 120-9 set in 2019 by former teammate Ashley Hodulik, who is a freshman throwing collegiately at the University of Oregon. Jena Jacoby is third all-time with a throw of 113-8 in 2012.

Newsome threw 94-0 in the hammer, the fourth-best mark in school history.

"I was really happy the hammer went so well," Kiefer said. "I wanted to set the record, and I envisioned myself doing it, but I didn't know it would happen tonight. I felt really good, and I felt comfortable gliding through the ring."

"That was so beautiful," Friend said of Kiefer's record throw. "It was awesome to see her so excited, just an awesome moment."

Newsome, Friend and Kiefer combined to throw a season best 301-0 to win the discus. Newsome finished third individually at 111-8, while Friend was fourth at 107-0 — beating her previous best of 104-

2 by almost three feet. Kiefer threw 92-4.

The trio also was first in the shot with a combined distance of 99-½, a season best. Kiefer was second at 37-1½, just three-quarters of an inch shy of her PR. Kiefer threw 32-3 and Friend threw 29-8.

Friend, Kiefer and Newsome have thrown consistently well all season.

"It's just practicing and performing as best we can in practice, so we can do our best in the meets," Kiefer said. "The season's been really good so far, and we have a lot of room to grow yet. We can achieve more."

Kiefer's school record in the hammer and second-place finish in the shot came after what she said was a disappointing performance in the discus. Her season best in the discus is 102-3.

"I just tried to calm myself down, and get myself ready for the next event," Kiefer said. "It worked out well, but I still have room to improve in all of my events."

In the pole vault, the team of sophomores Julia Sabo and Hannah Montag, and freshman Saylor King was third with a combined height of 23-6. Sabo was third individually at 9-6, and she finished sixth in the 100 with a PR of 13.40, beating her best of 13.41.



Individually in the other field events, junior Mikayla Hoelter was third in the long jump (16-1¼), and Hoelter and Stevenson finished in a six-way tie for third in the high jump (4-8). The Eagles were fourth in the high jump and fifth in the long jump.

Junior Megan Graham (4-0) completed the high jump team, while sophomore Claire Carpenter (14-10) and senior Paige Woodruff (14-3) also competed in the long jump.

Sabo wasn't sure how the team would perform Friday because of a bizarre week, due to the approximately five inches of snow that fell Tuesday afternoon into Wednesday morning. The team's tri-meet Tuesday against Woodmore and Rossford was canceled, and part of the team practiced in the high school hallways Tuesday.

"You're not sure how they're going to come out when you have a week like this," Sabo said.

"But they came out like gangbusters. That spread throughout the team. I told the field eventers to get this thing rolling, and they did. It flowed right into the running events."

Running events

The 4x800 team of Baum, Ward, Stevenson and Bowman won in 10:16.57, winning by 7.71 seconds over Liberty-Benton.

The time was their best of the season, lowering the time of 10:17.25 last week at the Napoleon Invitational. Stevenson had a PR during the relay.

The 4x800 is another one of Eastwood's strengths, and the Eagles have many runners who are capable of running the race.

The Eagles posted a PR or season best in nine of the 11 running events.

The 800 sprint medley team of senior Kayla Serres, freshman Lila Kiefer, freshman Kayla Buehrer and Montag was sixth in 2:06.23. The 1,600 sprint medley team of Carpenter, freshman Reilly Might, sophomore Kayden Firsdon and senior Jamie Lahey was fourth in 4:49.40. Firsdon had a PR on the 400 leg.

"They faced great competition, and their times improved and they still have room to drop their times," Sabo said of the running events. "In the next couple of weeks, we'll start tapering things off, and that'll be exciting to see where things end up."

The Eagles have only three more meets before hosting the Northern Buckeye Conference meet May 15. They host Fostoria and Lake in a conference tri-meet Tuesday, and visit Elmwood in a conference dual May 4. They also compete in the Oak Harbor Invitational May 7.

Eastwood's district meet is May 20 and 22 at Oak Harbor.

"They're feeling more comfortable about their events, as far as how to take them out," Sabo said. "They're going out harder. They're finishing. That's one of the things we talked about at the beginning of the year. So many times they're trying to hold off and have a great finish, but you have to put in the effort at the beginning of the race and your finish will come. They're starting to see that as they get more and more in shape as the season progresses."

Eastwood's second-place finishes came from junior Aubrey Haas in the 300 hurdles, and the 4x400 relay team of Hoelter, Stevenson, Ward and Haas.

Haas had a time of 48.39 in the 300 hurdles, lowering her previous best of 48.41 during a dual meet March 30 against Oak Harbor. The 48.41 clocking was seventh-fastest in school history, and Haas moved closer to Jessica Primeau (48.08, 2000) for sixth place on the all-time list.

The 4x400 team had a time of 4:15.96, beating its previous best of 4:20.23. Stevenson, Ward and Haas all ran PRs.

Also finishing third for Eastwood were:

- 4x100, team of King, Sabo and sophomore Emma Downs, and Hoelter, 52.03, a season-best. The previous best was 52.38.

- 4x100 shuttle hurdles, team of Haas, senior Reegan Sheets, Might and Carpenter, 1:10.53, a season best to lower the previous best of 1:12.30.

- 4x200, team of King, Might, Downs and Sabo, 1:52.41, a season best to lower the previous best of 1:53.66.

Freshman Haley Sponaugle had a PR in the 1,600 with a time of 6:01.98. Her previous best was 6:05.43. She finished eighth.

The Eagles were fifth in the distance medley with a time of 14:29.77, a PR from their previous best of 15:24.49. Bowman, Sponaugle and Baum completed the team.



Big picture

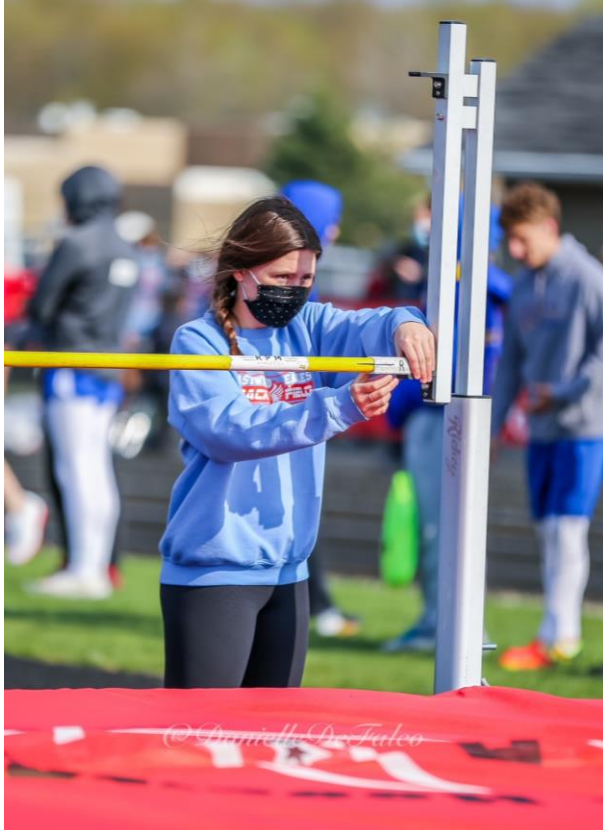
The terrific performance at the Eastwood Relays was the latest gem by the Eagles, who have performed well and competed hard in their four dual/tri meets and four big invitationals this season.

“Not having last year’s season, everyone has been so anxious and so excited to actually have a track season for once,” Haas said. “That’s really motivating us, knowing it did get taken away from us. We’ve proven how much we really

wanted to have a season.”

Last season was canceled because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the team’s winter indoor season was limited to practices only.

The team didn’t compete in any meets because their meets they would have scheduled were at least two hours away, and parents/fans weren’t allowed inside those venues. The universities, where Eastwood normally visited for indoor meets, canceled their high school competitions.



“You can see how dedicated everyone is, and you can see how much energy everyone has in every single practice and every single meet,” Haas said. “Our coaches are the most dedicated people I’ve ever met, and we build off that. To see how much the people around us care makes us care even more, not only for ourselves, but for the team. Everyone contributed tonight, and it shows how truly dedicated we are to each other.”

Friend said the Eagles’ team spirit and family atmosphere have played an important role in the success, too. Eastwood has a great mix of youth and experience on its roster with 12 seniors, 10 juniors, 16 sophomores and 19 freshmen.

“It’s really the spirit,” Friend said. “The spirit is real. We’re one big family. We encourage each other, we push each other and we celebrate each other’s successes.”

One of the best moments of the night for the Eagles was junior Addie Young’s season-best

time in the the distance medley relay (800-400-1,200-1,600). Young had a time of 68.0 on the 400 leg as she broke the 70-second mark and lowered her previous best of 70.8.

When Young learned of her PR, she immediately broke into a huge smile and celebrated with her teammates near the start/finish line. The celebration included the 4x400 team, which then finished second in a season-best time. The distance medley and the 4x400 are the final two events.

“It’s fantastic everyone is contributing,” Friend said. “It’s everyone on the team, not just one or two people. It’s everyone together.”

Complete results of the meet are available at:

<https://www.baumspage.com/track/eastwood/relays/2021/Results%20to%20view.htm>