

## **Girls have a 'ton of positives' in second-place finish at Napoleon Invitational**

**By Kevin Gordon**

NAPOLEON — Leah Emch resumed her march up Eastwood High School's all-time Top 10 list in the 3,200.

Kyrie Henline had personal records in the pole vault and long jump. She also moved up two places on the school's all-time list in the pole vault.

And their teammates on the Eagles' track and field team added five more personal records and two season bests relay times Saturday during the Napoleon Invitational.

Eastwood turned a day of quality performances into a second-place finish in the eight-team meet. The Eagles won three events, scored in 16 of the 17 events and totaled 129 points.

Celina won with 189 points, while Napoleon was third with 119.

"We performed very well today," said Emch, who won the 3,200 in 11:53.16, good for a winning margin of almost 11 seconds.

The time moved her from eighth place to fifth on Eastwood's career list. The sophomore ran the eighth-fastest time of 12:02.98 during Tuesday's dual meet against Elmwood and Woodmore.

Saturday's meet was held on what was easily the warmest day of the season with temperatures in the 80s.

"It was really warm, but everyone adapted and put their heart out and performed very well," Emch said.

Henline, a sophomore, finished third in the pole vault by clearing 9-6, improving her previous best of 9-0. Eastwood senior Julia Sabo won the pole vault with a height of 10-10.

Henline was eighth in the long jump with a distance of 14-1 $\frac{3}{4}$ , a career best.

"Everyone went out and gave their best effort," Henline said.

Eastwood also won the 4x800 relay where senior Kayden Firsdon, junior Haley Sponaugle, senior Talia Baum and junior Amelia Ward won in a season-best time of 10:13.61.

The Eagles had multiple scorers in six events, adding three-second place finishes and seven third-place finishes. Eastwood also had a total of 13 finishes in fourth through eighth place.

Schools were allowed to enter up to three athletes in the 13 individual events, and one team in the four relays. The top eight finishers in each event scored team points.

“There were a ton of positives,” Eastwood head coach Nikki Sabo said. “It was a good day.”

### **Distance runners fare well again**

Emch winning the 3,200 and the 4x800 relay winning were part of another solid day by the Eagles’ distance runners. Eastwood had five other scorers in the three distance racers.

“I felt pretty good,” Emch said of the 3,200. “The race went pretty well overall. I’m pretty happy with the time.”

Emch has run well outdoors after finishing the winter indoor season in March with a sixth-place finish in the Division II-III state meet in the 3,200. Her time of 11:16.97 was a school record.

“That really helped me, and gave me a lot of confidence,” Emch said. “That was a fast race, and it got in my head that I could run faster outdoors. I’ve tried to stay dedicated to my training, and take all of our workouts seriously and run them how you’re supposed to run them.”

Emch originally made the outdoor Top 10 list last season when she ran a time of 12:07.75 for ninth place. The time came when she won the Northern Buckeye Conference championship.

“I was hoping to move up this year,” Emch said. “This year is crazy, moving up that quickly. I wasn’t expecting that until my senior year.”

Also for Eastwood in the distance events:

In the 800, Ward was third in 2:37.18, Firsdon was fourth in 2:37.68 and junior Z Ramsey was eighth in 2:40.10.

In the 1,600, Ramsey was fifth in 5:50.21.

In the 3,200, Sponaule was fourth in 12:23.10.

“They’re awesome,” Sabo said of the distance runners. “They work so hard during practice, and they had an awesome winter. They got a lot of miles in, and it’s paying off.

“They’re getting PRs left and right,” Sabo added. “They work well together. They support each other. They encourage each other. That’s huge, too, to be great teammates and push each other, and still celebrate each other’s successes.”

### **Henline Part II**

Henline had a busy meet, alternating between the pole vault and the long jump, and mixing in the 400 and the 4x200 relay. The pole vault and long jump runways were side-by-side.

Henline, a sophomore, originally cleared 9-0 during the Eagles' final dual meet last season May 4, and matched the height the next week during the Northern Buckeye Conference meet.

This season, Henline cleared 8-6 in each of the first three meets, followed by 9-0 in the fourth meet.

"I finally got past the mental block of 9-0 that I was stuck at," Henline said. "I finally got over the next height, and I'm thrilled about that. I felt good during the warmups, and I told myself this is the day I'm doing to do it."

Henline moved into a three-way tie for seventh on Eastwood's all-time list, after starting the day in a four-day tie for ninth.

"I'm super excited about that. It's a big accomplishment," Henline said. "I'm hoping for even bigger heights now."

Henline bettered her previous long jump mark of 14-1¼ earlier this season. "My run was way better than normal and took off on the board. That was a good day for me," Henline said.

### **Seconds and thirds**

The Eagles had three second-place finishes — senior Olivia Newsome in the discus, 123-6; sophomore Lilly Mullholand in the high jump, 4-10; and senior Emma Downs in the 100, 13.23.

Eastwood had five other third-place finishes:

- Shot put, Newsome, 31-6¾.
- 400, Baum, 1:05.29.
- 200, Sabo, 27.81.
- 4x100 relay, Downs, Sabo, junior Saylor King and Mullholand, 52.21 (season best).
- 4x400 relay, team of Mullholand, Baum, sophomore Mallory Sandberg and Firsdon, 4:32.36.

### **Looking back/Looking ahead**

The Eagles have made progress during the first three weeks of the season.

"We've improving," Sabo said "The sprint times are coming down. We always tell them the season will get them into shape, and it's starting to show.

"We're off to a good start," Sabo added. "We definitely have a ways to go, and that's normal; that's what training is for. We're starting to see some things, like who to put where as far as trying to maximize points for later on in the season."

Now, the Eagles are seeking even more improvement during the next three weeks going into the NBC Championships May 13 at Otsego, followed by the district meet the following week.

“We’ve been performing solidly,” Emch said. “We’re in a good spot for this point in the season, but we still have to get better. We can’t be satisfied.” The Eagles are receiving contributions from every event, and many different individuals.

“The environment is great,” Henline said. “Everyone is hyped up and excited because everyone is contributing. It’s not just one event, a few people who are making the team successful. That pushes everyone to do better.”

## **NEXT**

The Eagles host Rossford Tuesday in an NBC dual meet and the Eastwood Relays Friday. The Rossford meet is Eastwood’s Senior Night, with the seniors and their parents being recognized starting at 4:15 p.m.

## **NAPOLEON INVITATIONAL RESULTS**

<https://www.baumspage.com/track/trevent.php?peventid=69&table=C>

## **EASTWOOD-ROSSFORD INFORMATION**

<https://www.baumspage.com/track/trevent.php?peventid=142&table=C>

## **EASTWOOD RELAYS INFORMATION**

<https://www.baumspage.com/track/trevent.php?peventid=830&table=C>