

Girls qualify 6 individuals, 1 relay to regionals



All photo credits: Danielle DeFalco

By Kevin Gordon

OAK HARBOR — Leah Emch and Julia Sabo both won district track and field championships Saturday at Oak Harbor High School.

And the Eastwood High School athletes will see plenty of friendly faces at next week's regional meet.

The Eagles qualified four other individuals and one relay team to the regional during Saturday's final day of the Division II district.

Emch was the district champion in the 3,200, and Sabo finished first in the pole vault.

The top four finishers in each event at the district advanced to the regional at Lexington High School, located near Mansfield. The regional is May 25 and 27.

The other regional qualifiers with top four finishes were junior Z Ramsey in the 1,600 and the 3,200; junior Haley Sponaugle in the 1,600; senior Kayden Firsdon in the 800; sophomore Kyrie Henline in the pole vault; and the 4x400 relay team of senior Talia Baum, sophomore Lilly Mullholand, Henline and junior Amelia Ward.

Eastwood qualified for the regional in a total of seven events. On Thursday, senior Olivia Newsome in the discus, and the 4x800 relay team of Baum, Emch, Firsdon and Sponaugle both advanced by winning district championships.

The Eagles finished third as a team, scoring 94.5 points to trail Perkins with 115 and Toledo Central Catholic with 101.

Emch dominant in winning 3,200; Ramsey finishes a solid fourth

Emch dominated the 3,200, winning in 11:36.17 and building a margin of almost 14 seconds over the second-place finisher. Ramsey had a stress-free race, too, finishing a solid fourth in 12:25.84. She finished just under 13 seconds ahead of the fifth-place runner.

"To win a district championship is satisfying," Emch said. "I thought the race would be closer, but I was able to win and feel pretty good about my time."



Leah Emch

Emch said the runners were slowed because they had to run into a strong wind on the backstretch. Her PR earlier this season of 11:35.11 is the third-fastest time in school history.

"I wanted to run a better time, but the conditions weren't the best. Hopefully, I'll be faster next week," Emch said. Ramsey's PR is 12:10.33.

"I really went out hard in the (3,200); that was a good race," Ramsey said. "I didn't PR, but I still ran a good time, and that's a tough double."

Ramsey ran the 3,200 approximately an hour after qualifying for the regional in the 1,600 where she finished fourth in a PR time of 5:43.24. Her previous best was 5:45.79.

"I'm happy with my day," Ramsey said. "I really wasn't expecting much in the (1,600), but I wanted to qualify for regionals in the 3,200. The (1,600) usually doesn't feel easy for me, but today it felt easy. I didn't go out too hard, and that made it a little easier."

"I haven't PR'd in the (1,600) all year, and I wanted to today," Ramsey added. "I'm happy I was able to do that. I wanted to qualify for the 3,200, so I didn't finish as hard as I normally do in the (1,600) because I knew I was in position to qualify."



Kyrie Henline

Sabo finishes first, Henline third in pole vault

Sabo cleared 11-6 to win the pole vault for the third straight year, and Henline jumped 10-0 for third place. The only other vaulter to clear at least 10-0 was Perkins junior Ellie Bodle, who was second at 11-0.

"I felt really good. It was a good day of jumping," Sabo said. "It's great to win the district again, and I feel good going into regionals. I felt good at 11-6, and I know what I need to work on in practice this week, and I was on a lot

better poles this week."

Henline cleared 10-0 for the second straight week. She also made the height for the first time last week when she finished second in the Northern Buckeye Conference Championships.

"It was a good day," Henline said. "I felt confident coming in. I knew what I needed to get done. I put it all together. I'm comfortable with third because (Sabo and Bodle) are good vaulters, and I can't wait to improve in practice for next week."

Henline has cleared 10-0 the last two weeks after jumping 9-0 or 9-6 in five straight meets.

“It’s been more mental than physical,” Henline said of her recent success. “I’m over the hump. I know I can do it. I’ve been over 10-0 now, and the more I do it, the more confident I get. I’m figuring out what I need to do to go even higher.”

Sabo holds the Eastwood record at 12-0, and Henline is tied for fourth all-time at 10-0.

“I’m so excited to be vaulting with (Sabo),” Henline said. “She’s been here with me since I’ve been in seventh grade. We push each other to get better. She always tells me what techniques to do, and she’s always encouraging me. She’s helped me a lot.”



Haley Sponaugle

Sponaugle takes second in 1,600

Sponaugle was second in the 1,600 in 5:28.37 — the sixth-fastest time in Eastwood history. Her previous best was 5:31.24, which had been the eighth-fastest time in school history.

“I’m pretty happy with it. It’s like a three-second PR, and I’ve been trying to break 5:30 all season, so to do that was nice,” Sponaugle said. “I’m happy to be going to regionals. I hadn’t run this race at districts since I was a freshman and I didn’t qualify then, and to be able to finish second is big.”

Sponaugle led most of the first three-plus laps before she was passed on the final lap by Port Clinton freshman Morgan Wiechman, who won by only .44 seconds.

“I knew going into the race, if I was going to get passed, it was going to be on the last lap because my kick isn’t my strong suit,” Sponaugle said. “I tried to make a move on the third lap to get as far ahead as

possible. It didn’t go as planned, but I could tell I made a move which isn’t always the case. I knew I was going to have to get a lead and hold her off for as long as possible.”



Lilly Mullholand

4x400 relay uses season-best time to take third

The 4x400 team of Baum, Mullholand, Ward and Henline used a season-best time of 4:16.49 to finish third and advance to the regional.

“I felt good about the way we went out and competed,” Mullholand said.

“We knew the potential we had, and we went out and gave it our all,” Henline said.

The Eagles had a solid finish, ending up a comfortable seven seconds ahead of the fifth-place team. Central Catholic won in 4:06:66, while Perkins was second at 4:09.67.

“We felt pressure to be in the top four, so we would qualify for regionals,” Baum said. “Once the race started, we worried about running and what we had to do individually, and doing well for each other. We’ve all been running for

each other, and helping the team improve. We know what we expect from each other, we hold ourselves accountable and we all have positive energy.”

The Eagles’ previous best was 4:17.11 during Thursday’s preliminaries. The time was the third-best of the eight-finalists.

“That’s a good time for us,” Ward said. “I was really proud of our time. We run for each other and the team, not ourselves. The competition was good here, and it’ll be even better at the regional. Today helps us to know we’re running well right now.”

“We have a very solid team, and we’ve been able to get that time down and down,” Mullholand said. “I’m excited to see what we can do at regionals.”



Talia Baum



Kayden Firsdon

Firsdon finishes fourth, Ward fifth in 800

Firsdon used a late charge during the final 200 meters to earn her trip to the regional. She was fourth in 2:29.93 to edge Ward by .14 for the final regional berth.

Firsdon’s time was a PR, lowering her previous best of 2:31 last season. Her previous best this season was 2:33.51. Ward’s time was a season-best, beating her previous time of 2:33.73.

Firsdon was fifth before her strong finish, which came shortly after she was boxed in on the backstretch.

“That was very different, being boxed in, since it has never happened to me before,” Firsdon said. “I did my best to close the gap. I told myself I had to keep going. Down the homestretch, I told myself I wanted to run again at regionals, especially since it’s my senior year. This year is really big for me because I want to compete at regionals after last year (she finished 13th at the regional last year).”

The second- through fifth-place finishers were separated by less than two seconds. The winner was Bodle in 2:25.09.

“I knew once I kicked it in the last 50, 60 meters, I knew I could get fourth, and then it was just a matter of who crossed the finish line first,” Firsdon said. “She’s (Ward) a great teammate. I couldn’t run my race without her. We push each other and both of us work hard, and that helps both of us improve. I wouldn’t be here without her. When I passed the finish line, I was thrilled but also it was like I can’t believe I did that, especially after last year.”

Firsdon finished fourth in the district 800 last season by passing a teammate at the finish line.

EAGLES ALSO SCORING IN THE DISTRICT/TOP 8

400: 5) Mullholand, 1:02.52; 6) sophomore Emerson Sheets, 1:07.03.

100 HURDLES: 6) sophomore Mallory Sandberg, 17.11.



Amelia Ward

4x100 RELAY: 6) team of junior Saylor King, senior Emma Downs, Henline and Sabo, 52.19.

4x200 RELAY: 8) team of Sandberg, junior Joelle Jared, and sophomores Emma Kiefer and Bella Provo, 1:56.23.

LONG JUMP: 8) Downs, 15-1½.

EAGLES ALSO COMPETING SATURDAY

SHOT PUT: sophomore Mylie Frantz, 30-½; and senior Olivia Newsome, 29-1.

LONG JUMP: Provo, 13-4¼.

OAK HARBOR DISTRICT RESULTS

<https://www.baumspage.com/tf/nw/2012/oakharbor/2023/Saturday%20Results.htm>

LEXINGTON REGIONAL INFORMATION

<https://oh.milesplit.com/meets/550111-ohsaa-division-2-region-6-lexington-2023>