

## Boys, girls impressive in beating Oak Harbor



Photo Credit: Danielle DeFalco

### By Kevin Gordon

LUCKEY — Eastwood High School's boys and girls track and field teams recorded impressive victories Tuesday in thrilling and hard-fought meets to start the season. The boys won the 4x400 relay — the final event of the meet — to earn a 69-68 victory over Oak Harbor. The team of freshmen Caleb Souder and Noah Haar, junior Jake Limes

and sophomore Noah Smith won the 4x400 in 3:40.71 to edge Oak Harbor by 4.54 seconds.

The girls won nine of the 17 events in their 75-62 victory over OH.

Among the Eagles' winners were sophomore Julia Sabo, who was first in the pole vault with a height of 10-0, tying for the third-best height in school history; and junior Aubrey Haas, who won the 300 hurdles in 48.41, the seventh-fastest time in school history.

The Eagles' next meet is Saturday at the Liberty-Benton Invitational. The meet originally was scheduled for Thursday, but was moved because of cold and windy conditions predicted for Thursday.

### Boys Recap

Souder, Haar, Limes and Smith combined to win the 4x400, long the signature event of the Eagle boys program.

Head coach Brian Sabo and retired head coach Gary White, who started the tradition, love the 4x400 because it's the final event of the meet and because the race requires a demanding mix of speed and endurance.

Oak Harbor held a 68-64 lead going into the 4x400.

The four relay events are scored with five points going to the winner, and no points for second or third place. In the 13 individual events, the winner receives five points, the runner-up scores three points and the third-place finisher earns one point.

Eastwood hasn't lost a non-league dual meet since the 2004 season, and its last loss in a conference dual meet came during the mid 1990s.

At one point, White rewarded the members of his 4x400 teams with baseball hats signifying their ran the relay. The hats were highly coveted by members of the team.

“For it to come down to the 4x4, I was completely all right with that,” Sabo said. “I felt fine with it coming down to them.”

Limes filled in for senior David Russell, who was held out of the relay because of a sore hip. The meet was the first since the 2019 season for the Eagles after last season was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Souder, Haar and Smith all were running in their first varsity meet. Limes was the only Eagle to run in four events Tuesday. He also won the 100 in 12.47 and was third in the 200 in 25.09. He ran on the 4x200 relay team which finished second in 46.86.

“They just fought and ran well,” Sabo said. “They were so pumped and excited to know it was going to come down to them. The energy was great. I appreciated that. They didn’t have any nerves. They were excited to go out and run. I knew they’d run decent, but they really ran well. They wanted it so badly.”

The 4x400 boys and girls relays from both schools were cheered on by their boys and girls teammates, and a large group of fans.

“It didn’t feel like COVID,” Sabo said. “The energy from the fans, the energy from the boys and girls teams was phenomenal.”

Junior Corey Jay won two running events for the Eagles, finishing first in the 1,600 in 4:57.45 and the 3,200 in 11:17.58. Souder won the 400 in 55.40.

The Eagles won four of the five field events — sophomore Jaleel Rayford won the high jump, 5-0; sophomore Bryce Koprowski-Kistner won the long jump, 20-0¾; senior Gage Might won the shot put, 44-7; and sophomore Dalton Hesselbart won the pole vault, 12-0.

In addition to its nine victories, Eastwood had four second-place finishes and nine third-place finishes. The Eagles had 25 personal records during the meet.

Oak Harbor is the defending Sandusky Bay Conference champion. The Rockets opened their season Saturday by scoring 147½ points to win the Seneca East Invitational.

“I’m really pleased. I knew it would be close,” Sabo said. “Oak Harbor has a really solid team. This is easily one of the better non-league teams we’ve faced, especially right out of the gate.” Eastwood returns just six athletes who have competed in one of the last two Northern Buckeye Conference meets. The Eagles are seeking their 20th straight league title this season.

“With a team that is so young, they fought the whole night,” Sabo said. “We either won some things or we learned. I know guys cared that they didn’t get that point, and I appreciate that. They fought the whole night. I can’t say enough about our team. There was so much positive energy. I’m really happy for them.”

The Eagles scored 29 points in the field events, including a sweep of the top three places in the high jump and the long jump. They added 40 points in the running events.

“We’ll always taken so much pride in the field events because it’s points you never really see,” Sabo said. “They started us off really well. It gave us energy.”

The Eagles have 44 athletes this season, including just seven seniors to go along with 13 juniors, 13 sophomores and 11 freshmen.

“I feel good about where we’re at after tonight, but we have some things to fix, and they know that,” Sabo said. “I appreciate they know if something went wrong, they cared enough to fix it themselves or tell us what happened and have us help them fix it.

“The team spirit was fantastic,” Sabo added. “There’s so much more upside to this group yet, but the effort and the energy were fantastic. I don’t mind losing, but we’re going to go after

winning. There were multiple times today I saw guys take the lead in something and ended up losing at the end, but they really went after it ,and I appreciated that.”

## Girls Recap

Eastwood’s nine first-place finishes were complemented by nine second-place finishes and five third-place finishes. The Eagles had 10 PRs in the meet.



*Photo Credit: Melinda Barman*

“It was a great day,” said Eastwood head coach Nikki Sabo, whose team scored 40 points in the running events and 35 points in the field events. “I said at the end it was all track and field, and it truly was all 17 events. The field events started things off. We knew that was an area we needed to do well in. All 17 events brought it today, and that was great because Oak

Harbor is a great team. They competed really hard. It was a big confidence booster.”

Oak Harbor has won the last eight SBC championships, and is the defending Division II district champion. The Eagles are seeking their 20th straight conference championship this season. The Rockets were competing for the second time this season, after totaling 172 points Saturday to win the Seneca East Invitational. Oak Harbor and Eastwood will compete in the district meet May 20-22 at Oak Harbor.

“You go against good competition, and it brings out good performances,” Sabo said. “You get to see how much they care, how tough they are, how they’re going to go after it and how they’re going to compete. To see that early on, knowing there’s room for improvement, that gets you excited from a coach’s perspective.”

The Eagles’ other individual winners in the running events were sophomore Talia Baum in the 1,600, 6:12.02; and freshman Haley Sponaugle in the 3,200, 13:41.13.

Eastwood won three other field events — senior Hannah Friend in the discus, 103-2; junior Mikayla Hoelter in the long jump, 16-1½; and junior Ava Kiefer in the shot put, 37-0¼.

The Eagles won two relays. The 4x800 team of senior Jamie Lahey, junior Maisy Stevenson, sophomore Hannah Montag and freshman Avery Bowman won in 11:06.24. The 4x100 team of sophomores Kayden Firsdon, Sabo and Emma Downs, and Hoelter won in 53.31.

“There’s still work to do because we’re going to see Oak Harbor at districts,” Sabo said. “There’s still things we need to learn, just little things from cleaning up exchanges, starts, and field event fundamentals .”

The Eagles held a mini intrasquad meet last week to help prepare the team for the season after last season was canceled.

Eastwood has a young team this season, with 19 freshmen and 16 sophomores on its roster of 57 athletes. The Eagles also have 10 seniors and 12 juniors.



*Photo Credit: Danielle DeFalco*

“They got the taste of a meet for the first time in two years,” Sabo said. “They didn’t really drop off at all. It was cool to see where they are and just knowing we still have a long way to go. Times are going to drop, distances are going to go further. That’s exciting.

“Last week, having that little mini meet was big, because they were more confident coming into this meet today, knowing what to expect, what the officials are going to say, how the event is going to be run,” Sabo added. “The biggest

thing is it’s just the whole warming up, cooling down, how far in advance do you need to do that to be ready to go and they did that today.”

### **Sabo, Haas crack Eastwood Top 10**

Sabo cleared 10-0 to win the pole vault and then moved the bar to 10-7 in attempt to break the school record of 10-6 shared by Allison Abke (2017) and Elise Wolff (2014). Jessica Lang also jumped 10-0 in 2016.

But Sabo missed all three of her attempts at the record.

“The jump at 10-0 was really put together well from a technical standpoint,” said Brian Sabo, who is one of Eastwood’s pole vault coaches. “She’s put in a lot of good work the last couple of days. She really cares about the technical side of things. She’s going to keep improving.”

Tuesday’s varsity meet was the first for Julia Sabo after last season was canceled. She holds the Eastwood indoor record of 9-8 set in 2020, prior to the cancellation of the outdoor season.

“For her to be up there with those girls, girls she’s enjoyed watching throughout the years, is really cool and exciting,” Brian Sabo said. “We were hoping she’d have a chance at the school record. We’re quite a bit better than we were last year and we’ve gotten faster. She’s a lot more confident, and we’re getting better technically.”

Haas’ time in the 300 hurdles came during her debut in the race. The school record of 46.08 was set by Angie Getz in 1998, while next up for Haas is Jessica Primeau, who is sixth with a 48.08 time in 2000.

“She blew me away with that,” Nikki Sabo said, adding Haas asked her before the race what would be a good time for her to run. Sabo said she told Haas 54 seconds would be a good time. “Shows you what I know. That was really exciting. She ran really well.”

Complete results of the meet are available at:

<https://www.baumspage.com/track/eastwood/032619/2021/Results%20to%20view.htm>