

## Boys impressive in repeating NBC championship



All photo credits: Danielle DeFalco

### By Kevin Gordon

TONTOGANY — Eastwood High School's boys track and field team fashioned an impressive start to Saturday's Northern Buckeye Conference Championships.

Bryce DeFalco finished first and Kevin Lewis was second in the long jump, Ian Sibbersen finished second and Hunter Lauer was third in the shot put, and 90 percent of the Eagles who competed early posted a personal record.

The remainder of the meet was just as productive for Eastwood.

The Eagles scored 143 points to repeat their conference championship at Otsego High School. Otsego was second with 127, Genoa was third with 117 and Lake was fourth with 106. Eastwood scored in all 17 events and had two placers in 12 of the 13 non-relay events.

The top eight finishers in each event scored team points, with the points awarded on a 10-8-6-5-4-3-2-1 basis. Schools could enter up to two individuals in the non-relay events, and one team in each of the four relays.

"It's an exhilarating feeling," DeFalco said of the back-to-back championships.

The Eagles had won 19 straight league titles, overlapping the Suburban Lakes League and the NBC, until Genoa won the NBC title in 2021. The SLL became the NBC for the 2011-12 academic year with Fostoria and Rossford replacing Lakota and Gibsonburg.

"Your senior year is especially different because it's the last one," DeFalco said. "I couldn't be any more proud of the guys who I've competed with the last three years, and it would have been four years if not for COVID. It's been a great experience. It feels really good to win it again.

"To perform the way we did today, and to do it with the culture and the energy we've been able to create, as a captain, I couldn't be any happier or prouder," DeFalco added. "We had a lot of energy and gave a lot of effort and we poured into each other."

The Eagles' championship is even more impressive because the team won without two of its best athletes — senior Noah Smith and junior Caleb Souder, who remain out with hamstring injuries. Smith was named the athlete of the meet last year after winning the 110 hurdles and the 200, and helping the Eagles win the 4x400 and 4x100 relays. Souder finished seventh in the 200, and ran on the 4x200 relay which finished third.

Even though Smith and Souder have been injured, they've still been valuable members of the team all season. They've been at every meet and every practice this season, consistently encouraging and

coaching their teammates. During the week, Eagle head coach Brian Sabo asked the team's individuals to compete for someone else in the meet to provide the athletes with extra motivation. Sabo repeated that message on the bus at Otsego Saturday morning, and encouraged the team to compete hard and perform well for Smith and Souder.

"They're always right there supporting and helping everyone," Sabo said. "That means a lot and what makes our program special, pouring into each other. I knew they were ready for the meet and it was PR, PR, and the energy was great among each other at the start. I love these guys. I love who they are. I love how they act. I love how they compete. All of the rest is a bonus."

The Eagles had 17 PRs and one season best during the meet, and a number of near PRs/season bests. "That idea snaps you into the right mindset, knowing you're competing for someone else and you have someone else in mind," DeFalco said.

"Everyone came out with a PR mindset today and contributed to the team," Sibbersen said.



### **DeFalco regains long jump championship**

DeFalco, a senior, held the lead in the long jump after the preliminaries when he jumped 20-4½. The 16 jumpers each received three jumps during the prelims with the top nine distances advancing to the finals where the athletes received three more throws in an attempt to improve their distance.

Lewis was fourth after the prelims at 19-3½, but the sophomore took the lead on his first jump of the finals with a PR mark of 20-7. But DeFalco — after embracing and congratulating Lewis following his jump of 20-7 — came back to take the lead for good on his first jump of the finals with a PR distance of 21-3. Lewis' jump of 20-7 was good for second place. Lewis also was sixth in the 400 in 55.20.

DeFalco's previous best was 21-2 as a sophomore, while Lewis' was 20-0.

"It feels really good to win it again," said DeFalco, who struggled last season because of a leg injury suffered during football.

DeFalco's best jump last season was only 18-8½. He jumped 20-½ to win the NBC championship in 2021.

"I knew I had a chance to win it, and I came in with a PR mindset, just like Coach Sabo said," DeFalco said. "I got my first jump in (18-9), and it was all out from there. I had the winning mindset. I knew I

had to get it done. To go from not being able to even jump 19-0 last season to being in the 21s, it is a great feeling to know I'm back."

### **Workhorses deliver big results**

Kevin Lewis, sophomores Andre Lewis, Jesse Poiry, Dayquan Oliver and junior Kaiden Sanchez all had big days as they competed in the maximum four events.

Andre Lewis and Poiry swept the hurdles. Andre Lewis won the 110 hurdles in 15.77, and Poiry was second in 15.89. Both times were PRs. Lewis and Poiry also PRd during the preliminaries, with Poiry having a time of 15.91 and Lewis running a time of 15.97.

Poiry won the 300 hurdles in 41.86, with Andre Lewis finishing third in 42.10. Both times were PRs.

Sanchez was third in the 100 in 11.44 and fifth in the 200 in 23.82. Oliver was third in the 200 in 23.30 and sixth in the 100 in 11.63. Oliver ran a PR during the preliminaries of the 100 with a time of 11.39. He also ran a PR during the 200 preliminaries with a 23.30 clocking and then matched that time in the finals. Kevin Lewis was sixth in the 400 in 55.20, a PR.

In the high jump, Andre Lewis was third with a PR of 6-0 and Oliver was sixth at 5-8.

The 4x200 relay team of Poiry, Kevin Lewis, freshman Collin Broghan and Sanchez was third in 1:35.75. Brogan's split was a PR.

The 4x100 relay team of senior Anthony Molina, Sanchez, DeFalco and Oliver was second in 45.13.

The 4x400 relay team of senior Kegaan Herr, Andre Lewis, Kevin Lewis and Poiry was fifth in 3:41.96. Kevin Lewis and Andre Lewis both ran PR splits.



Andre Lewis & Jesse Poiry

“They’re going back and forth between events,” Sabo said. “It’s hard. They focused on this, and now I’m going to that, and it’s time to shut the first event down and focus on the next one.” Sabo praised Oliver and Sanchez for how they ran the 200, one of the final three races at the end of a long day. Both were asked to go out as hard as they could during the first 150 meters, and they did — putting themselves in position to win before finishing third and fifth respectively. “That’s hard to do, but they did it and put themselves in position,” Sabo said. “Instead of finishing seventh and eighth, they finished third and fifth. You go out

hard, you give yourselves a chance. I just appreciate them so much. It’s humbling when you ask them to do something and it’s humbling when they just do it. It’s an honor to coach this group of guys.”

### Field events score big points

The Eagles scored 56 out of a possible 90 points in the five field events.

Sibbersen, a junior, threw 47-3¼ to finish second in the shot put and Lauer, a freshman, was third at 43-½. Junior Braden Bowdle threw 141-5 for second place in the discus, while senior Dalton Hesselbart cleared 13-4 for second place in the pole vault, and sophomore Hayden Hoelter was sixth at 10-0.

“The field event points are hidden points, silent points,” Sibbersen said. “People are usually watching the other races, instead of the field events, but the field events are what win a lot of meets. We value the field events, and it gives us a lot of confidence and momentum early in meets. When you get off to a great start in the field events, it usually carries over to the other events and the rest of the meet and really helps the confidence of the team.”



### OTHER NBC SCORERS BY EVENT

4x800 relay — team of Herr, freshmen Henry Howard and Tyler Bengry, and sophomore A.J. O’Brien, fifth, 9:03.11. Herr ran a PR split.

1,600 — sophomore Connor Schramm, seventh, 5:01.00 (pr).

800 — freshman Austin Miller, sixth, 2:12.66 (pr); and Herr, seventh, 2:13.56.

3,200 — freshman Raif Johnson, seventh, 11:06.50.

### NEXT

The Eagles compete in the Division II district meet Thursday and Saturday at Oak Harbor.

### NBC CHAMPIONSHIPS RESULTS

<https://www.baumspage.com/track/trevent.php?peventid=149&table=C>

### OAK HARBOR DISTRICT INFORMATION

<https://oh.milesplit.com/meets/544370-ohsaa-division-2-district-oak-harbor-2023>