

Girls aim for more special finishes at regional meet



Photo Credit: Tammy Schmeltz

By Kevin Gordon

Eastwood's girls track and field team doesn't have to do anything special to qualify for the Division II state track and field championships.

After all, the Eagles have been doing special things all season.

They've performed consistently well this season. Their next challenge is this week's regional at Lexington High School.

Eastwood qualified for the regional in seven events, including the 4x100 relay team of senior Nichole Swartz, sophomore Jamie Schmeltz, and seniors Jessica Lang and Katelyn Meyer.

The Eagles qualified for the regional in six individual events — Meyer in the long jump, the high jump and the 100 hurdles;

Schmeltz in the 100 and the 200; and sophomore Shelby Getz in the 300 hurdles.

"The first goal is to make finals. That's what we preach every single day," Eastwood coach Nikki Sabo said. "We're to the point where they can recite that in their sleep because they know that's what needs to happen.

"To do that, they need to be solid with the same effort they came with at districts, and be ready to compete."

The top four finishers in each event at the four regionals qualify for state June 1-2 at Ohio State University's Jesse Owens Stadium.

But this season, the Ohio High School Athletic Association approved the addition of two at-large qualifiers for state in the running events only. The at-large qualifiers will be the next-two fastest regional times overall, regardless of region.

The finals of the high jump are Thursday, followed by the finals of the long jump on Saturday. The semifinals of the 4x100 relay, the 100 hurdles, the 300 hurdles, the 100 and the 200 are Thursday. The finals of those events are Saturday.

In the semifinals, the top two finishers in each heat and the next four-fastest times overall advance to the finals.

"They need to bring good effort in every jump, every run, have solid handoffs," Sabo said. "As long as they do that, they should have a really good chance of making the finals. They don't need to run school records.

"You get out of our district, and you're doing OK. We had a tough district, and it's setting us up, that if we perform well, we'll do really well at the regional."

4x100 relay

Eastwood enters the regional as a district champion, thanks to its 50.19 clocking at Oak Harbor. The Eagles set the school record in the district prelims with a time of 49.49.

The 50.19 time is the best of the 16 regional qualifiers. Eastwood's time of 49.49 is second in Division II this season, and 19th best in the state, regardless of division.

"They had such a high after running 49.49 on Wednesday and I think they just thought it was going to happen again," Sabo said.

The district final was run in challenging conditions, forcing Swartz to run into a head wind and a tough exchange with Schmeltz. The Eagles were in second place when Lang gave the baton to Meyer for the final leg.

"It was one of the first times they were behind going into that last exchange," Sabo said. "But that's good. It's good for them to experience that, and adjust the way they did. That was a learning experience and it'll help them going into this week."

The four compete in a wide variety of sports and activities at Eastwood, but they all compete hard.

"They get along really well, and they have a common goal," Sabo said. "They have a lot of different interests. It's cool to see them gel as one team."

Eastwood is looking to advance to state in the 4x100 relay for the third straight season, with Meyer and Schmeltz returning from last season, and Meyer and Swartz returning from 2016.

Meyer/long jump, high jump, 100 hurdles

Meyer is a four-event regional qualifier for the third straight season. At state last season, she was third in the high jump, fourth in the long jump and 12th in the 100 hurdles.

In addition to winning last week's district championship in the 4x100 relay, Meyer won the long jump and the high jump, and was third in the 100 hurdles. She finished her career with 11 district titles.

"She does a good job of compartmentalizing one event at a time. She's able to switch events and keep her focus on the one event," Sabo said.

During the regional, Meyer will only have one jump each day.

'She's mentally tough," Sabo said. "It's a blessing because I've had other athletes who have been long jumpers and high jumpers, and usually, it's a good day in one and a not-to-so-good day in the other. But she's been able to do both very, very well."

Meyer's best in the long jump this season is 18-0 and she set the Eastwood record last season at 18-4½. Her best in the high jump this season is a school-record height of 5-8.

She holds the school record of 15.35 in the 100 hurdles, originally set in 2016 and matched last season. Her best this season is 15.41, coming in the district final where she finished third.

In the district meet. Meyer went 17-5¾ to win the high jump and 5-4 to win the high jump.

Meyer's district marks rank her first in the long jump and the high jump among the regional qualifiers, and fifth in the 100 hurdles.

Meyer ranks third in Division II in the long jump and 14th overall, regardless of division. In the high jump, she's tied for first in Division II and tied for fourth overall. She's 10th in Division II in the hurdles.

Schmeltz/100, 200

Schmeltz has run well again this season. She qualified for the regional by finishing fourth in the district in both the 100 (13.09) and the 200 (26.93).

Her season bests are 12.98 in the 100 and 26.93 in the 200, the 200 time coming in the district prelims. Her career bests came at the Northern Buckeye Conference meet last season, 12.95 in the 100 and 26.28 in the 200.

"She has more confidence, more experience, what it's like to run in both prelims and the finals and being smart about the race," Sabo said. "She's learned you don't have to win your heat in the prelims if it's the top two and the next four fastest times. You can conserve energy in those prelim races. She has that experience from a year ago." Her district time in the 100 ranks 10th among the regional qualifiers and her 200 time is 11th, but the times in both races are closely bunched.

"First and foremost, she's a competitor, Sabo said. "She wants to win. She hates losing. She will do whatever she can to try to win. If she doesn't, she's mad, even if it's a season-best time. That's okay to still be hungry and want to improve and be better. She works hard in the weight room. She works hard during practice."

Getz/300 hurdles

Getz was terrific in the regional final, finishing fourth with a 47.71 clocking — the fourth-fastest time in school history. Her race, from Lane 8, included a dive at the finish line to ensure she earned the final regional berth.

"Shelby is all effort," Sabo said. "She will give you everything that's in her body, and it showed on Friday night when she literally threw herself across the finish line. She said, 'I am not going to be fifth.'"

Getz's 47.71 clocking is fifth among the regional qualifiers. Next on the school's all-time top 10 is Rachel McNay at 47.51 in 2011.

"Sitting in Lane 8, she needs to go out fast, and that's what she did last Friday (in the district final)," Sabo said.

For the complete regional schedule, meet program and results, visit:

<http://www.baumspage.com/track/trevent.php?peventid=799&table=C>