

Fertig qualifies for state with second-place finish in discus

By Kevin Gordon

LEXINGTON —Erik Fertig is returning to the state high school track and field meet. The Eastwood senior qualified for his sport's showcase event in the discus where he is the reigning Division II state champion.

Fertig finished second with a throw of 169-3 during Thursday's Lexington High School regional to advance to the state meet May 31-June 1 at Ohio State University's Jesse Owens Stadium.

The top four finishers at all four regionals advance to state, along with the next two distances overall, regardless of region.

Fertig's mark was his second best of the season, and his best since May 5 when he threw 166-10 in the first throwers meet at Eastwood. He threw 156-10 during the Northern Buckeye Conference meet at Eastwood May 11 and 159-6 at the Oak Harbor district meet last week.

His personal record of 172-3 came April 2 when Eastwood hosted Genoa and Swanton in a dual meet.

"I'm very excited, most of all to get back on the train of some good throws and to be going back to Jesse O," Fertig said. "The biggest pressure is getting there, getting to state. The regional meet is where the pressure is.

"Once you're at state, you can just let it fly and compete," Fertig added.

Fertig was the regional runner-up to conference rival and Genoa senior Noah Koch, who threw 186-4. Koch and Fertig were so dominant their distances were good enough to finish first and second at every other Division II regional.

"I knew he was ready," Eagle coach Brian Sabo said. "He was super focused, super ready, energetic — just who I thought he'd be. His goal was to get to state, whether it was first place or fourth place, and he took care of what he needed to do."

Fertig's first throw in the preliminaries went 158-6, and he improved his distance on his next three throws. His final two preliminary throw were 161-9 and 164-11. He then threw 165-9 on his first throw in the finals.

His last two throws in the finals went 159-6 and 169-3

"That's what a throwing series should look like, improve every throw," Fertig said. "I kept getting the little things right, and it added up to a nice total.

"Getting a big throw or two early helps a lot because you get a mark in, and it almost guarantees you're going to the finals. It's good to put some pressure on some other guys, and make the mental side of the sport show and make them respond to what you're throwing."

The 15 athletes were divided into two flights for the preliminaries. They received three throws in the prelims, with the top nine distances advancing to the finals where they received three more throws in an attempt to improve their distances. A throw of 160-2 was needed to earn one of the four automatic berths to state, and a throw of 133-7 was needed to make the finals.

"He was very consistent," Sabo said. "It was a good series of throws. He was very good. He just kept going."

The throwers had to contend with a strong crosswind that blew left to right across the sector. Fertig said keeping the discus low was the key to success.

"If you get the tip of the discus too far up, the wind will take it and push it back," Fertig said. "If you keep it low, you can cut right through the wind and throw it farther. The changes I made, made me throw farther. You just have to roll with the wind."

The athletes, despite the wind, still had sunny and warm conditions.

"It wasn't what we were looking for," Fertig said of the crosswind. "Some guys, it helped. Some guys, it didn't. You can't complain about the weather.

"The wind didn't bother him. He stepped up and threw," Sabo said.

Fertig will attempt to become a double state qualifier Saturday at 11 a.m. when he competes in the shot put where he finished ninth last year.

He's coming off a PR at the district meet with a distance of 55-8¼, the second-best of the 16 regional qualifiers. Koch is the top seed at 56-6¾ after winning the Oak Harbor district championship.

"This gives me a lot of confidence going into Saturday," Fertig said. "It was really a good showing today, and I'm really excited to get to practice Friday and fine-tune some things and then get back here Saturday and making the most of that event."

Eastwood's 4x800 relay team of senior Alex Boyer, junior Luke Coffman, senior Jack Chappuies and junior Lucas Pease finished eighth in their final.

The team had a time of 8:25.85, compared to its season best of 8:15.79 during the district meet.

"Like last weekend, our goal was four PRs, and we didn't have any today," Sabo said.

"We didn't finish that great. But at least they invested, and that's what I appreciate about them. If there is anything I want from our middle distance runners, our 4x8 guys or any distance runner, it's to invest early.

"You go back to Hannah Sponaule, she would invest early, and people would say she would die at the end of races, but she invested early and won a lot of races. Our guys, at least, invested early today. It might not have been the total time they wanted, but I respect the fact that they invested early and went after it. That's all we ask of them."

Shelby won in 7:56.03. The other three automatic state qualifiers from the regional were: Milan Edison, second, 8:03.94; Columbus DeSales, third, 8:04.28; and Columbus Bexley, fourth, 8:08.89.

"I can't be disappointed," Sabo said. "Coming in, my gut told me we'd need to run 8:07 or 8:08 to get out. It just wasn't our year this year. The only downfall is I don't get another week with those guys.

"Boyer and Chappuies have had great careers," Sabo added. "I would have loved one more week with those two guys, and I have two other guys (Coffman, Pease) who ran hard, and I get them back."

Thursday's complete results are available at:

<https://www.baumspage.com/rtrack/2012/6/2019/Day%201%20Results.pdf>

Saturday's lane assignments are available at:

<https://www.baumspage.com/rtrack/2012/6/2019/Finals%20Program.pdf>

Saturdays' schedule is available at:

<https://www.ohsaa.org/Portals/0/Sports/Track-Field/RegTrackSchedule.pdf>