

## Girls looking forward to the season



*Photo Credit: Tammy Schmeltz,  
sophomore Reegan Sheets*

By Kevin Gordon

Eastwood's girls track and field team is a puzzle this season.

The Eagles have plenty of pieces — the majority of them new.

So, the challenge for the Eagles is to put the pieces in the right places in time for the Northern Buckeye Conference meet May 11.

Even though the Eagles return 21 letter winners, they return only four athletes who scored in the NBC meet last season and six other athletes who competed in the conference meet.

The Eagles have won 18 straight conference championships, the last seven coming in the NBC. They also won the final 11 championships in the Suburban Lakes League. The SLL became the NBC, with the NBC adding Fostoria and Rossford in

place of Gibsonburg and Lakota.

The returning point scorers from the NBC meet last season are junior Jamie Schmeltz, who was second in the 200; junior Shelby Getz, who was fourth in the 100 hurdles and the 300 hurdles; senior Shaunna Jubenville, who was fourth in the long jump; and senior Moira Cunningham, who was fifth in the 3,200.

Also competing in the NBC meet's individual events last season were junior Erica Lang in the discus, senior Liz Arnston in the shot put, sophomore Melinda Barman in the 1,600, and Lahey in the 800.

In the relays, Schmeltz and senior Brianne Kwiatkowski return from the winning 4x100 team; Schmeltz and sophomore Ashlyn O'Brien return from the runner-up 4x400 team; Lahey returns from the fourth-place 4x800 team and Getz returns from the fifth-place 4x200 team.

In all, Eastwood has 52 athletes, consisting of 11 seniors, 11 juniors, 14 sophomores and 16 freshmen.

"We will be considered very young. Some teams will look at us as inexperienced," said Eagle coach Nikki Sabo, who is in her 10th season. "I like that role. It'll be fun. We'll have to nickel and dime as far as scoring points. We'll move people around throughout the dual meet season to figure out what's going to be our best combination going into the conference meet."

The Eagles won last season's NBC championship with 132 points, beating Rossford 117, Woodmore 112 and Lake 109.

"Rossford and Lake didn't graduate as much as we did," Sabo said. "They have a lot more coming back we do. It'll be fun putting the pieces together to go after the conference championship."



*Photo Credit: Tammy Schmeltz  
Sophomore Paige Woodruff*

Although Eastwood has many new faces, Sabo likes the team's mix of newcomers and veterans.

The team's early practices have gone well, even though the first week of workouts saw the majority of the work done indoors. The Eagles practiced in the gym, thanks to athletic director Jeff Hill, who scheduled gym time for the team. "We got a lot of teaching done," Sabo said. "The kids have been diving in since day one, and I appreciate that. You can tell they're excited for the season. They're listening. They're taking in the information the coaches are giving them. It gets you excited for what's to come."

The Eagles' first meet is Tuesday at home against Clay.

"They're working hard every day," Sabo said.

"They're open to trying new events or techniques. The athletes have to be open to

constructive criticism because we're trying to make them better."

After being senior-dominated last season and with such a young team, Sabo said quality leadership from the team's older athletes is important.

Cunningham, senior Madison Findley, Getz, Jubenville and Kwiatkowski are the team's captains.

"We're already seeing that in practice," Sabo said, adding it began during the team's winter indoor season. "They're already helping the younger athletes out. They're running workouts, modeling how to run a workout, how to do a tough workout. We want them to provide leadership, lead by example, compete hard and the rest will take care of itself and their teammates will follow suit."

"We have some kids in our senior and junior classes who have been patient," Sabo added. "They've been watching. They've been working hard. Now, it's their chance. Last year's group left their legacy, and this group knows how to work hard, how to compete, how to go after goals by watching the grades above them."

The Eagles' freshmen class will have a chance to contribute, Sabo said.

"We have a lot of freshmen coming in who did very well with middle school track," Sabo said. "They won the conference, and they're very diverse. They have every event covered which is nice because it will blend in with what we have returning. It'll make a nice balance in all three sectors, from the field events to sprints to distance."

The Eagles are hosting the NBC meet this season.

"There's a lot of unknowns and that's what's nice, very year is different," Sabo said.

"It's a clean slate. We'll see you steps up and go from there. You do more teaching with a young team and that's fun, that's a part of coaching I enjoy. When you're a teacher, that's what you like.

“When you have a veteran group, sometimes you forget you have new athletes that you need to explain why we’re doing a particular drill or workout,” Sabo added. “With a veteran group, they know. But with a younger group, you need to explain that, and it’s good to reinforce the importance of workouts to the returning lettermen. You’re getting back to basics.”