

## Eagles benefit from indoor season



*Ashley Hodulik talking with Coach Aricka LaVoy*

By Kevin Gordon

Eastwood's track and field athletes already are honing their techniques and improving their conditioning.

The Eagles are hard at work indoors for the spring outdoor season.

They have six practices and four meets scheduled during the indoor season, culminating with the state meet March 2 at the SPIRE Institute in Geneva.

Official practice for the outdoor season begins March 4. The Eagles' first meet is March 26 at home against Clay.

The indoor practices are on

Sunday afternoons, and the meets are on Saturdays or Sundays. The

practices and meets have averaged 30 athletes each, boys and girls combined.

"The indoor season is a great time to get the rust off, and you can set your goals and expectations for the outdoor season," said senior Jack Chappuies, a member of the Eagles' 4x800 relay team which qualified for the state outdoor meet last spring. "The indoor season gets us ready to perform for when the outdoor season starts."

### Getting reacquainted

Chappuies said the indoor workouts are his "first major running" since the outdoor track season ended in June. He's a member of the soccer team and is in shape physically, but he's ready to increase his speed and conditioning to meet the demands of outdoor track.

"You can see where you're at, so you know where you stand and what times you want to reach, and what you need to do to reach those times," Chappuies said. "Indoor track allows me to get back into the swing of running and get back into shape. I'm happy with where I'm at in terms of what I expected. If I stay on track, it'll pay off in the spring."

The indoor workouts allow for more technique work in the running and the field events, but the work is especially important for the athletes who compete in the field events and the hurdles.

Athletes also can try new events during the indoor season.

"It's more opportunities and more reps to throw. It really helps us when we get to the outdoor season because we've had more reps," said junior Ashley Hodulik, who broke Eastwood's indoor record in the weight throw Jan. 13 during the team's first meet at the University of Findlay.

"It really helps you get your technique down and gives you more comfort in the ring, getting used to the technique and footwork, Hodulik added. "It gives you a chance to compete, so you're not as nervous when you're competing. It helps your confidence coming into the outdoor season, and I've been finding confidence through success. I want as many chances

as I can have to get my hands on an implement. It'll help going into the outdoor season to have that success."

Hodulik threw 40-3½ to break the record of 39-2¼ set by Jena Jacoby in 2012. The weight throw is indoor track's version of the hammer throw.

"That was a great feeling, setting a school record," Hodulik said. "It shows me I can do it when I put my mind to it. It really helped me build some confidence. I'd like to break it again."

Hodulik is participating in indoor track for the first time after joining the Eagles for the outdoor season last spring. The 6-foot-1 Hodulik knew she wasn't a runner or a jumper, so girls head coach Nikki Sabo had her try throwing.

"I had always heard positive things about Eastwood's track and field team, and I really wanted to try track," Hodulik said. "I really didn't know what events I was interested in, and then I found throwing, and I fell in love with it from the start. (Coach Sabo) told me I'd be very successful with throwing."

Hurdlers Shelby Getz, Shaunna Jubenville and Logan Wendt enjoy the extra work during the indoor season. Jubenville also jumps.

"I like staying in touch with track during the indoor season because the hurdles are very technical," said Wendt, a junior, who won the Northern Buckeye Conference championship in the 110 hurdles last spring. "If you don't do it for a while, you start to lose touch with it, like any other sport."

The hurdlers use a mix of the meet-sized hurdles and smaller practice-sized hurdles that allow the athletes to work on their technique even more. The hurdlers also are able to work on their techniques coming out of the starting blocks.

"It's good practice for the outdoor season," said Getz, a junior, who is looking to build on last spring's fourth-place finish in the 100 hurdles at the NBC meet and regional berth in the 300 hurdles. "It helps you get in shape, and see what you need to work on. I feel pretty good about where I'm at right now. I've been to more practices than I have been in the past, and it's showing."

The jumpers and pole vaulters can work on their techniques, too.

"The goal is to have some more one-on-one time," Nikki Sabo said.

Once the outdoor season begins, the Eagles girls will have approximately 50 athletes on the team and the boys should have about 60.

"During the indoor season, I'm one coach with six long jumpers," Nikki Sabo said. "During the outdoor season, I'll have 20-25 long jumpers. With the personal attention we can give them during indoor season, they can actually serve as demonstrators of different drills once we head outdoors."

### **Ideal conditions**

The indoor practices and meets can help make up for the challenging weather the teams face during the outdoor season, especially in March and April.

Eastwood's pole vaulters can jump in the school gym during the winter since the gym is equipped with a vaulting box.

"Here in the gym, it's not raining, it's 70 degrees and you're in shorts. You can get quality work done," boys head coach Brian Sabo said. "It's hard to get quality work done outdoors when it's 20 degrees out and the wind is blowing."

The athletes like the extra one-on-one time with their coaches.

"You can get so many more reps and ask more questions, Jubenville said. "It also helps you build relationships with the coaches because you have more 1-on-1 time, and you can ask more questions. You can get to know your coaches as people, too, and I like that."

Jubenville is healthy after being slowed by shin splints as a junior last season. As a sophomore, she qualified for the state meet in the long jump and a regional final in the 300 hurdles. She was limited to the long jump and the 100 hurdles last spring.

"My events are all technical events, so this gives you a head start on getting your technique down and getting the rust off, and it gives you a chance to get in shape and see where you're at physically," Jubenville said. "This gives you a head start on the outdoor season, and the 1-on-1 coaching you get is a positive, too."

The indoor season is a benchmark for where an athlete is coming into the start of outdoor practice, and often allows athletes to develop confidence for the outdoor season.

"It helps build confidence," Chappuies said. "You get some races under your belt and get those nerves out. When you compete in your first meet during the outdoor season, you're not as nervous because you've already done a few meets. You get back into the competition mode."

"There's less pressure in the indoor meets because it's like a practice, but it's still fun and you still get the feel of competition," Getz said. "Every year, I forget what it's like in terms of the competition, and then when I come back, I realize what the competition is like, and I get competitive really quick."

### **The meets**

The indoor meets are held at colleges and universities around the state. The schools host the meets as fundraisers and recruiting showcases.

High school teams can travel as far as they want to compete, although Eastwood's scheduled indoor meets are at the University of Findlay and Bowling Green State University.

Indoor track is a club sport at Eastwood. The Ohio High School Athletic Association doesn't sanction indoor track.

Attendance at Eastwood's indoor practices and meets isn't mandatory, Brian Sabo and Nikki Sabo said.

"It's strictly optional," Brian Sabo said. "We want them to play other sports. If it's all right (with their winter sports coach), they're welcome to come in and get some technique work in with us."

The top 24 individuals in each event qualify for the state meet, although all 24 may not elect to compete.

Not all schools recognize indoor track, even as a club sport, meaning athletes who compete unattached are ineligible for the state meet. Some athletes decide not to compete at state because of other commitments.

The regular-season indoor meets are held without divisions, but the state meet will have two divisions — Division I and Division II-III. Eastwood's boys and girls compete in Division II-III during the indoor season, and Division II outdoors.

"Not everyone does indoor track, but you can still get a good idea of the competition for the outdoor season, especially in an event like the hurdles," Wendt said. "You generally don't see a whole lot of new hurdlers during the outdoor season, You're usually facing the same guys you faced during the indoor season. There are always some new guys, but this gives you a pretty good idea of the competition you'll be facing."

### **How it began**

Eastwood's indoor practices have been held since the early 2000s when they were started for the pole vaulters, Brian Sabo said. They eventually expanded to all field events, and the sprints and distance events.

“We have such good coaches in terms of technique work, so we feel we can get ahead a little bit and get some conditioning in,” Brian Sabo said. “The practices are volunteer for the coaches, too, but they’re great about getting here.

“It’s organized chaos all over the place, but we get our work done, and the kids and coaches enjoy it,” Brian Sabo added.