

## Depth, balance provide boys with 19<sup>th</sup> consecutive conference title



*Photo credit: Christine Limes*

By Kevin Gordon

The result was familiar for Eastwood High School's boys track and field team. The Eagles earned their eighth straight Northern Buckeye Conference championship and 19<sup>th</sup> straight conference championship overall.

They scored 168 points in Saturday's championship meet for a deceptively wide margin over Rossford. The Bulldogs were second with 118 points, edging Genoa by one for the runner-up spot.

But what was unfamiliar is the way the Eastwood won.

Although the Eagles performed well, they won only two of the 17 events and trailed Genoa by two points with only events remaining. Eastwood then scored 75 points in the final seven events — 400, 300 hurdles, 800, 200, 3,200, the 4x400 relay and the pole vault.

The Eagles' winners were senior Jack Chappuies in the 800 in 2:03.18; and the 4x800 relay team of seniors Alex Boyer and Chappuies, junior Lucas Pease and sophomore David Russell in 8:29.47.

Eastwood won the final 11 championships in the now-defunct Suburban Lakes League and has won all eight NBC championships. The Eagles have won their conference title in 22 of the last 23 seasons. They also won the SLL in 1997, 1998 and 1999 before finishing second in that league in 2000.

"It's unbelievable," Chappuies said of the streak. "The coaching staff has poured into us for 19 straight years, and the coaching staff has been unbelievable. To be at this moment and win the 19th straight at home is amazing."

The depth and balance consisted of nine second-place finishes, five third-place finishes and four fourth-place finishes. The Eagles scored in every event, and had two scorers in 10 of the 13 non-relay events.

The top eight finishers in each event scored team points. The points are awarded on a 10-8-6-5-4-3-2-1 basis. Schools entered two athletes in each individual event, and each school had one team in the relays.

The Eagles always have had depth and balance, but they've usually won far more than two events almost every season during their string of championships. And they've rarely had to come from behind late in the meet.

"If you're not winning events, we'd better be scoring a lot of doubles," Eastwood coach Brian Sabo said, admitting he didn't realize his team had won only two events until he was told of it after the meet.

"That's who we are," added Sabo, who is in his ninth season. "Depth obviously helps, and the guys take a lot of pride in wanting to score points, knowing the end result at three o'clock is what matters."

Giving great effort and competing hard were the order of the day for the Eagles.

The Eagles had six PRs, not including relay splits. They also just missed having a PR in a number of other events.

Russell's third-place finish in the 400 epitomized Eastwood's day. He had a time of 55.11, a PR, beating his best of 56.62 earlier this season.

Russell's run was even more impressive because he scored out of the first semifinal — often referred to as the slow heat, and athletes often don't score out of the first semifinal. The 400 doesn't have a true final. Instead, the 16 runners were divided into two heats for the final. The fastest times usually run in the second semifinal.

Russell also was inserted into the 4x800, running the final leg in place of senior Luke Coffman. The change was made to keep Coffman fresher for the 1,600. Coffman was second in the 1,600, finishing second in a PR time of 4:40.67.

Freshman Jacob Halko also scored in the 400, finishing fifth in 55.35.

"For (Russell) to get third (in the 400), that's who we are," Sabo said. "We're going to give a lot of effort and go hard no matter who is on the track. He embodied that."

Chappuies held off Boyer during the final 100 to win the 800 in a PR time of 2:03.18. Boyer was second by 1.69 seconds.

"I'm so happy to win that race. That's everything I've worked for," Chappuies said.

"That was one of the highlights of my career, and winning the 4x8 with my team is something I'll never forget."

Chappuies and Boyer have battled all season.

"I love running against (Boyer)," Chappuies said. "We fuel each other. We push each other to get better every day in practice."

The 300 hurdles was a big race for the Eagles.

Junior Christian Peters finished second in a PR of 42.40, and junior Logan Wendt was fourth in 42.70. Peters has run consistently well this season. He also was third in the 110 hurdles in 15.51.

"Peters, Russell, we have a lot of guys who compete and give effort," Sabo said. "We fought all the way through. This team fights. They battled. I started doing some math in my head about what events we had (left), and what maybe (Rossford and Genoa) had. I thought we were OK, as long as we performed."

"We had season bests, and (Rossford and Genoa) were doing well, too," Sabo added.

"They were just doing that much better."

The Eagles' other individual second-place finishers were: Erik Fertig, shot put (53-6¼), discus (156-10); Wendt, 110 hurdles, 15.51; and Coffman, 3,200, 10:36.57;

Eastwood had two second-place finishes in the relays: the 4x100 team of Boyer, seniors Jack Arman and Ceyleon Damron, and Wendt, 45.57; and the 4x400 team of Boyer, Chappuies, Halko and junior Nate McCauley-Benner, 3:35.74.

The Eagles' other third-place finishers were: junior Austin Kieper, discus, 152-9; freshman Emmet Getz, high jump, 5-8; and the 4x200 relay team of freshman Jacob Limes, McCauley-Benner, Halko and freshman Ethan Kwiatkowski, 1:36.99.

Kieper, who had a PR in the discus, already was eighth on Eastwood's Top 10 list in the event going into the meet. But Saturday's throw moved him within just under four feet of seventh place.

Complete results of the meet are available at:

<https://www.baumspage.com/track/northernbuckeyeconf/2019/Results%20to%20print.pdf>