

Montag building on last season

By Kevin Gordon - April 13th, 2017

Jacob Montag is striving to build on last season.

The Eastwood pole vaulter posted a personal best of 13-6 last spring after missing most of his sophomore season because of a foot injury.

Montag is a senior now, and he's looking for even more improvement this season. He's off to a good start.

The 5-foot-10, 154-pounder quickly increased his career best for the second time this season, clearing 14-4 during Tuesday's meet against Elmwood and Lake. He originally increased his career best to 14-0 in Eastwood's first meet this season against Clay and McComb March 28, and then jumped 13-6 during Saturday's Whitmer Invitational.

Montag has high expectations this season, including the breaking of school record of 15-4 set by Division II state champion Crosby Schemenauer in 2009. Schemenauer is the only Eagle to clear 15-0 and holds the school record by seven inches.

"I'm pretty happy so far, but we still have a lot of practices left and a lot of hard work to do," said Montag, who cleared 13-6 to finish 10th in the Division II-III Ohio indoor meet March 4. "Hopefully, we'll get to where we want to be."

Should Montag come close to or even reach his goal of 15-plus, he'll have a chance to win a Division III state championship.

Even a vault of 14-0 or better would provide him with a chance to earn All-Ohio recognition and stand on the awards podium at the state meet. The state meet is June 2-3 at Ohio State University's Jesse Owens Stadium.

The top eight finishers in the state meet are named All-Ohio and are honored on the awards podium.

Last season, Montag cleared 13-4 to win a district championship at Gibsonburg and 13-6 to finish eighth in the regional at Tiffin Columbian.

"If he sets his mind on doing something, those are very reachable goals," Eastwood coach Brian Sabo said.

Montag jumped 10-0 as a freshman and then missed most of his sophomore season because of a soccer injury. He cleared 11-0 in his first meet last season and gradually raised his career best throughout the season.

He had a career-best vault in three of his last four meets, boosting his best from 12-6 to 13-6. The only meet he didn't have a career best was the NBC meet where he went 13-0 for third place on a day dominated by rainy and windy weather.

Four Eastwood vaulters have qualified for state since 2000, including champions Schemenauer and Ryan McKibben in 2006. The Eagles also have had two second-place finishers, Kyle Schlumbohm in 2011 and Schemenauer in 2008. Jesse Whitt was ninth in 2005. All four competed in Division II before Eastwood moved to Division III last season.

"I saw I had potential to be one of the best pole vaulters to come through Eastwood," Montag said of last season. "That's driven me during the offseason to meet this goal with the help of the coaches and the fitness program we have here."

Montag enjoys watching videos of other vaulters, including Olympians, to help him improve. He also videos all of his meet and practice vaults, and has even built workout equipment at his home to help him in his event.

He was the NBC middle school champion as an eighth grader, clearing 8-6.

"He's an absolute student of the event," Sabo said. "He watches videos and then applies that to his vaults and critiques them ... being in the right position, having the right technique. With the amount of learning he's done in the last year, it's really been amazing.

"He works hard in practice and does things on his own at home, and those things have gotten him to where he's at now," Sabo added about of the team's captains "He's a great leader. He helps others. He leads by example. He does his workouts hard."

But the pole vault isn't Montag's only success.

The striker was a second-team All-Ohio soccer selection as a junior and as a senior. He also was a first-team All-NBC selection all four seasons, earning player-of-year honors as a junior and co-player of the year honors as a senior.

Montag was a four-year member of the bowling team, helping Eastwood to the state tournament as a sophomore. He bowled a 300 game this season and finished the season with a 214 average. He was the place-kicker on the football team as a senior.

"I like competition," Montag said. "I like to strive to be the best, and that keeps the motivation because there's always going to be someone out there who is better than you. You can't stop working until you reach your goals, and then you can make new goals."

But being a multi-sport athlete isn't easy because of the 12-month training for each. Aside from track last winter, he played winter soccer and is on a soccer team this spring.

Montag is faring well academically with a 3.3 grade-point average. He'll attend the University of Findlay where'll play soccer and compete in the pole vault. He plans on majoring in physical therapy.

"It's hard, especially on the body, because the sports overlap," Montag said. "You just try to take care of your body and manage your time."