

Coffman seeks repeat NBC championship in the 3,200



Photo Credit: Tammy Schmeltz

By Kevin Gordon

Luke Coffman already has won one Northern Buckeye Conference championship in the 3,200.

The Eastwood High School junior is looking to repeat his victory this season.

Coffman is the defending champion in the 3,200 after winning last season in 10:26.64.

He has the NBC's fastest time this season, a 10:33.47 clocking April 13 at the Napoleon Invitational.

"My goal is to win that race, and be as close to 10 flat as I can get," Coffman said.

Coffman's personal record came last season when he ran a time of 10:19.49 at the Division II district meet at Oak Harbor where he finished eighth. His PR is the fourth-fastest time in Eastwood history.

Eagle assistant coach Corey Johnson set the school record of 9:44:27 in 2007. Keith

Madaras ranks second with a 9:45.30 clocking in 1987, while Garret Gabel is third at 9:54.90

which he ran in 1999.

"I'd definitely like to set the school record in the two-mile," Coffman said of the 3,200.

Coffman also runs the 1,600 and the 800, but said his favorite race is the 3,200. His PR of 4:42.34 in the 1,600 is less than three seconds shy of the school's all-time Top 10 list. A time of 4:39.70 is needed to make the list. Coffman's PR came at the NBC meet last season, resulting in a third-place finish.

"There's no shining moment in the two-mile," Coffman said of why the 3,200 is his favorite race. "In the 400 or even the mile (1,600), you can have an awesome first or second lap that sets the tone for your entire race. It's so much of a strategy game. It's more of a perseverance game.

"For the (two-mile), it's not like that. You've got to race, and go as hard as you. It's fun to challenge myself to do that, to bring out the best in yourself in such a long race, especially over eight laps. It takes a toll on your mind and body."

Should Coffman run both 1,600 and the 3,200 in the NBC meet and beyond, he said he'll go out hard in both. Some runners go out hard in one and not the other to help their chances of winning, and some even decide to run only one of the two.

"I'll try to do well in both," Coffman said. "I don't see much point in concentrating on just one race. Could it help me do better to do just one? Yes. But I represent the team

in both races, so trashing one is disrespectful to the team. It's like wasting an opportunity. I'll go after both races as hard as I can."

Genoa senior Sean Hoeft is the conference's two-time defending champion in the 1,600 and Woodmore junior Paul Koenig has finished as the runner-up the last two seasons.

Coffman's goal is to run a time in the mid 4:30s at the NBC meet.

"That would be a good time, a seven-second PR," Coffman said. "There are some really good guys in that race. I'd at least like to be in the mix in that race, and put myself in position to be at the front."

Although Coffman had his season-best in the 3,200 just under two weeks ago, he's not happy with the way he's running. His best time in the 1,600 this season is 4:54.6.

"I'm not running great," Coffman said. "I've had lots of races, and none of them have gone very well. I feel like I'm faster than before, but the times don't show it.

"I'm in good shape. I ran a lot a lot over the winter, and I did cross country and ran last summer, and did a lot of core workouts, so I feel much better. I feel like my heart is more efficient, but it isn't clicking yet. You have to fight through it. It's probably in my head. It's probably more mental than physical."

Coffman is one of Eastwood's captains.

"I try to lead by example, working hard, not screwing around, setting a good example," Coffman said.

Coffman is a cross country standout, too. He was a Division II state qualifier last fall, finishing 34th at state. He was the district champion the last two seasons, and finished 19th in the regional as a sophomore and sixth

last fall.

Coffman also won the conference championship last fall after a second-place finish in 2017.

"He's willing to run whatever you need him to run," Eastwood head coach Brian Sabo said. "He's always going to run hard, and he's always going to push. You're going to get hard effort from him. He always goes hard."

Coffman has enjoyed distance running since he began doing it in the seventh grade.

"I've liked running the distance races from the time I started," Coffman said. "You feel good about yourself because it's hard. You feel like you've accomplished something. As you get older and go through life, running is better for you than sprinting. Anything that gets your heart rate up is going to keep you healthy. Losing yourself on a long run mentally is great."

Coffman, who has a 4.1 grade-point average, plans on attending college at Bowling Green or Toledo with a major in architecture or engineering.



Photo Credit: Tammy Schmeltz

Coffman's also a member of the marching band, the concert band and the pep band. He's also in choir, the Acapella group, the school musical, Key Club, Student Council and Tri-M (a music honorary).

"I like numbers," Coffman said. "I like envisioning stuff, imagining stuff I can put down on paper."