

Emch qualifies for state in the 3,200 with school-record run; Foos narrowly misses PR in the 800



All Photo Credits: Danielle DeFalco Athlete: Leah Emch

By Kevin Gordon

LEXINGTON — Leah Emch is headed back to the state high school track and field championships. The Eastwood High School junior earned a return trip to state with a second-place finish in the 3,200 during Saturday's Division II regional at Lexington High School.

She broke the Eagles' 26-year-old school record by just over a second with a time of 11:24.92. The 1998 record of 11:25.98 had been held by Sarah Lohrbach.

The top four finishers in each event at the regional qualified for this weekend's state meet at Welcome Stadium in Dayton.

The state meet also includes two at-large qualifiers in each event. The at-large qualifiers are the athletes with the next two best times/heights/distances in each event across all four regions.

The top eight finishers in each event at the regional received medals and were recognized on

the awards stand.

The Eagles also will be represented at state by sophomore Jenna Gallant, who will compete in the seated shot put and the seated 100.

Gallant will compete in the 100 semifinals Friday at 6:40 p.m. If she qualifies for the finals, she'll compete again Saturday at 10:10 a.m. The shot put finals are Friday at 2:45 p.m.

Emch runs her event Saturday at 11:55 a.m.

Emch finishes second in school-record time

Emch put herself in position to earn a state berth during the first five laps of the eight-lap race, and then moved herself into second place during the final three laps.

"It's great to be going back to state," Emch said. "Last year, I got an at-large bid, so to actually qualify feels better and this year I'm in a lot better shape."

In addition to breaking the school record, Emch beat her personal record of 11:27.63 during last week's district meet at Oak Harbor High School. She's been chasing the school record all season, and ran times of 11:29.61 and 11:31.91 during the last month.

"It's a bit of a relief to break the school record, but I'm happy I have the record now," Emch said. "I've been close a few times, and it usually came down to a second or two on a couple of laps that made the difference. Now, my goal is to run even faster."

Emch was in the top three throughout the race, but she was passed twice. However, she quickly regained her position and eventually finished second.

“It’s the smartest race she’s run so far,” said Eastwood assistant coach T.J. Tuttamore, who works with the distance runners. “She got out where she needed to go and kept making moves in laps 5, 6 and 7. She responded to the people coming up next to her which is not usually what she does, but she did a good job of that today.”

“One girl passed me twice and I immediately passed her back both times,” Emch said. “Normally, I don’t have that in me. I’m the type of person who, if someone passes, I don’t respond. Today, no way that was going to happen. Deep down, I knew I was going to have to work to get to state, and it would come down to who wants it the most. I knew I wanted it, and I was going to go after it. I knew I had to respond.”

Huron freshman Rylie Towns won the race in 11:06.77, finishing just over 18 seconds ahead of Emch.

Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary junior Anne Rea was third, almost six seconds behind Emch. Marengo Highland senior Camryn Miller was fourth in 11:33.32.

Emch learned she set the school record as soon as she checked the timing board just past the finish line. She was the regional’s No. 3 seed, based on district times.

“It was a pretty decent time,” Emch said. “I thought I could do better, but I was surprised when I saw my time after crossing the finish line. Then, I realized my middle laps were off a little bit. I was hoping it would be better, but I’m OK with it. There’s room for improvement. Hopefully, I can improve my time next week.

“The competition today really helped,” Emch added. “This is who I’ll be with again next week, and it was nice to have people to run with.”



Looking ahead to state

Emch is looking forward to running at state again after finishing 12th last season in 11:48.76.

“If I could get All-Ohio, that would be really awesome,” Emch said.

The top eight finishers in each event at state are receive All-Ohio recognition, receive medals and are recognized on the awards stand.

Emch already is a three-time state cross country qualifier, earning All-Ohio honors as a sophomore and as a junior. She finished 14th in the state meet in each of those two seasons, with the Top 25 finishers earning the all-state recognition.

“I want to put myself out there, and not be afraid and really work like I did today,” Emch said. “I want to PR and run even faster. I feel that’s very achievable.”

Emch believes the experience of running at state last season will help her this season, even though the meet is at Welcome Stadium, instead of Ohio State University’s Jesse Owens Stadium.

A new track is being installed at the OSU stadium this spring, resulting in the switch to Dayton.

“I didn’t go out that hard last year,” Emch said. “This year, I know I’m going to have to go out hard and put myself out there. I’m one of those people who tries to catch up at the end, but it never works out, and you’re never going to win when you’re in the middle of the pack. It’s too much ground to make up. I have to put myself out there early. “Have been at state last year, I’ll know what to expect and what the atmosphere is like,” Emch added. “Last year, I was afraid because I was an underclassman. It was an experience I had never had before. I just have to focus on my race.”



Foos narrowly misses a PR in the 800

Eastwood’s Camille Foos ran well in the 800, posting a time of 2:27.05 for 13th place. The freshman just missed her PR of 2:26.59 during last week’s district meet.

“I would have liked to have run a PR, but I was close,” Foos said. ““I was proud of myself for the way I ran ... getting out in the first part of my race, and hitting my time goals, and then being able to compete in a race like this.”

“It was definitely a lot faster race than what I’m used to,” Foos said. “The competition was definitely very impressive. I tried to do my own thing and run my race. I was here to work today and try to get better. My goal was to run my race.”

Foos’ goal was to run a 68-second first lap, and she

did that.

Lexington senior Elyana Weaver, who finished seventh in the state meet last season, won the race in 2:14.83. A time of 2:17.32 or better was need to earn an automatic state berth.

Foos was a three-event regional qualifier. She competed in the 4x800 and 4x400 relays Thursday. The 4x800 relay finished ninth with the fifth-fastest time in school history, and the 4x400 relay just missed running a season-best time.

“It definitely made me more comfortable, having gotten Thursday under my belt,” Foos said. “I knew what to expect, what it was like to run here, and what the atmosphere would be.”

LEXINGTON REGIONAL INFORMATION AND RESULTS

<https://oh.milesplit.com/meets/568342-ohsaa-division-2-region-6-lexington-2024>

STATE MEET INFORMATION

<https://www.ohsaa.org/Sports-Tournaments/Track-Field/2024-Track-and-Field/2024-State-Tournament-Coverage>