

Athlete Spotlight: Franky Romano breaks ground as three-sport high school star

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
December 17 2015 4:40 PM



EDWARDSVILLE - Sophomore **Franky Romano** is a young man who has made waves in every sport he has participated in since starting high school in Edwardsville.

Romano is one of the few three-sport stars in the school and is now in his second sport of the season – wrestling. He has been competing in the 138-pound category early in the season for the Tigers. He was one of the top runners on the EHS boys' cross country team and he will be one of the leaders of the pack in middle and longer distances in the spring on the track team.

EHS wrestling coach Jon Wagner said Franky is just “a good kid.”

“He likes playing sports,” Wagner said. “He never ran cross country until this past year. He played football before. He really likes wrestling. It fits him physically and his nature.”

Franky said in the cross country season that he does love to run and has always enjoyed competing as a wrestler. He seems to also thrive on transitioning from sport to sport.

Speaking of making waves, Franky did that as an eighth-grader in track.

“I first heard about Franky at the IESA Sectional Track Meet during his eighth-grade year,” **head EHS cross country coach George Patrylak** said. “I was told by his coaches that they (Lincoln) were slightly down on the boys distance side and told the team if someone wanted to run at conference, it would be the 800.

“Several kids, including Franky (who had never raced 800 meters before), volunteered and the coaches had a time trial. Franky won the time trial and was plugged into the 800 at conference. Franky wound up running so well that he not only placed, but he was given the spot at sectionals.”

At sectionals, Franky ran fast enough to qualify for state.

“He qualified for state in only his fourth time ever racing,” Patrylak said excitedly.

Patrylak knew Franky had never run cross country in the past, but made a push for him to come out as a freshman.

His fourth time ever racing the 800 was at state.

“I knew that wrestling was passion, and I tried to play it as cross-country would help his conditioning for wrestling,” Patrylak said. “Unfortunately for us, Franky played football his eighth-grade year, and he fell into the stigma that football is the dominating sport in

high school. Once the football coaches made their pitch, and with Franky being such a great athlete, my chance of acquiring Franky for cross-country disappeared. Luckily for us, Franky had a difficult year of football his freshman year.”

After a successful wrestling season, Franky came out for track and field.

“My hope was to make him an 800 runner, but all of the coaches wanted a part of Franky,” Patrylak said. “Franky started the season working exclusively with Coach (Chad) Lakatos to work on speed and strength. He also spent time with Coach Vysoky to try pole vaulting. Throughout indoor and the beginning of outdoor, Franky continued to train with the sprinters and focus on running the 400 and 800 in meets. As the season progressed, Franky started to split his time between the sprinters and distance runners. This combination of disciplines helped Franky to progress, as he ended the season running a 2:05 leadoff half mile split as a freshman at sectionals.”

With a lot of persuasion from Patrylak, along with support from the track and field staff, they were able to convince Franky to come out for cross-country.

“I don't he was completely sold at first, as was evident by his attendance at summer optionals, but once the season began, I think Franky realized two things: that he was a good runner and that he likes to race.

“We knew Franky had potential. We knew he would see improvement quickly since he was a first year runner. We knew he could be good. We could never have imagined that he would be this good already.”

