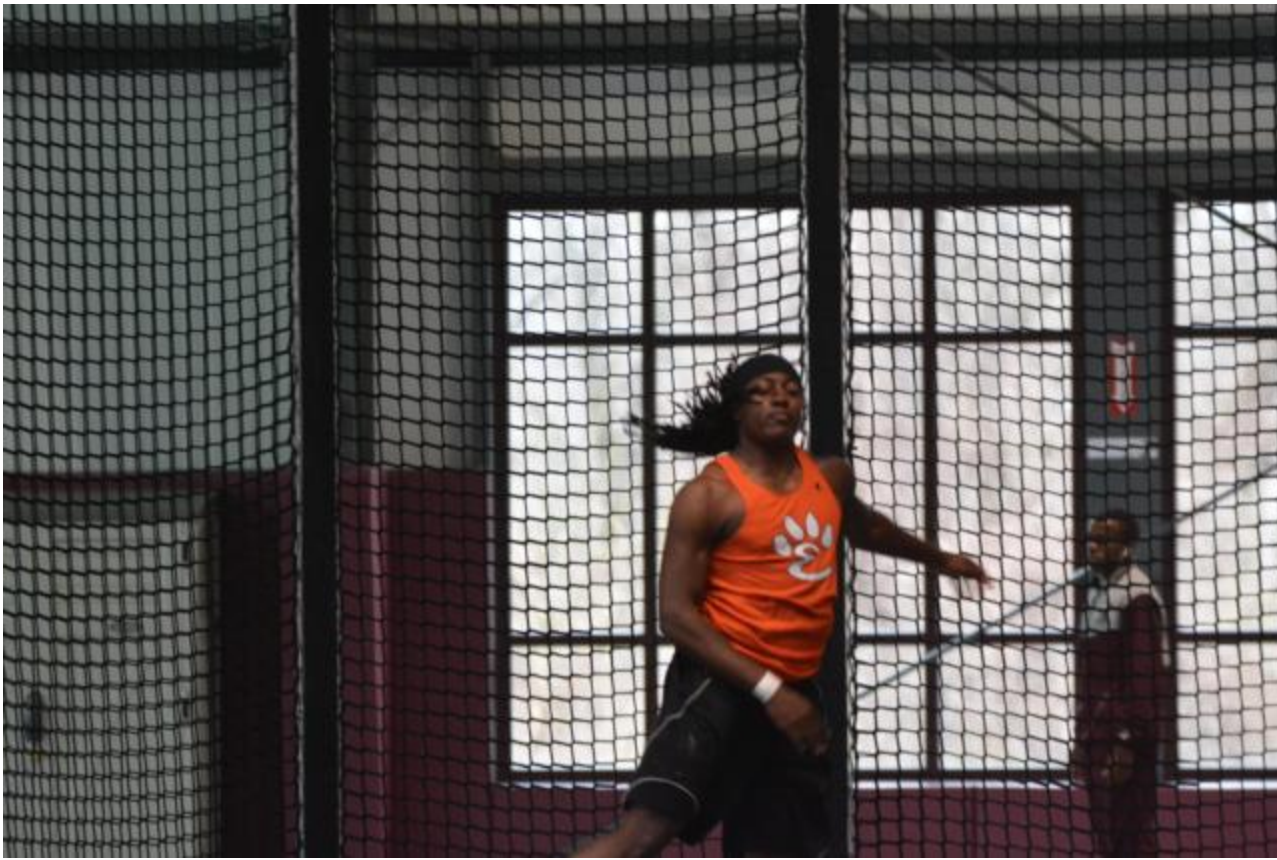




SKY IS THE LIMIT: Epenesa, Chapple should be two of state's best in weights this season

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE - A huge strength for Edwardsville's boys track and field team this season will be a combination of **junior A.J. Epenesa** and **senior Desmond Chapple** in the weight events.

Epenesa has already demonstrated he will be one of the state's best in both the shot put and discus with his performance on Saturday in the Southwestern Illinois Relays in Edwardsville.

Epenesa cracked the Southwestern Illinois Relays' discus record with a throw of 185-3 on Saturday. Epenesa won the shot put with a toss of 53-5. Chapple threw 46-4 in the shot for sixth on Saturday, but has thrown over 53 feet in practice, his weights **coach Matt Martin** said. Martin is also Edwardsville's head football coach.

Martin said he expects big things from both Epenesa and Chapple this track and field season if the two stay focused on their overall goals.

Epenesa had a best last year of 194-3 and Martin and Epenesa have both set a goal of 15 additional feet in the discus this year, which would take him over the 200-foot level, an incredible accomplishment for a high school track and field athlete. Martin said each year as he enters the season with someone in the weight events it is usually a goal to pick up right off where he finished last year and immediately start to improve.

"We are going to try to improve some their technique and quickness in the ring through the season," Martin said about both athletes. "I enjoy competing and always want kids to do their best. It takes an explosive athlete to be a good discus thrower with balance and power. A.J.'s release in the discus is so natural. I know A.J. is not going to make 40-foot jumps now each year, but I think he will continue to make gains and a 15-foot increase is realistic for this year."

Epenesa was second place in the discus last year at the IHSA Class 3A state meet and just missed the first spot during Edwardsville's team championship day.

Martin spent some time working with Epenesa on technique with video during Saturday's meet. The coach said if he notices something, he points it out to his throwers on video, but he said a coach wants to be careful not to overanalyze with his team members in the ring. Modern technology does allow a coach to show a shot put or discus competitor immediate points with technique, though, which is new today.

Both Epenesa and Chapple are imposing defensive players in football at their defensive end positions. Chapple, 6-foot-4, 235 pounds, has signed a national letter of intent to attend the University of Northern Iowa on a full football scholarship. He was recruited by several Division I schools before making a decision on the University of Northern Iowa.

Epenesa, 6-foot-5, 245 pounds, has made a verbal commitment to attend the University of Iowa on a football scholarship. Epenesa will likely go down as one of the best at Edwardsville High School to ever to play three sports - football, basketball and track and field. He was an All-State selection in football and basketball and now appears to be at the top of the heap for a second consecutive year in track and field.

Coach Martin sees only the sky as Chapple's limit as he develops in the college ranks with his size and athletic abilities.

Epenesa spends a considerable amount of time with Coach Martin in both football and track and has said previously he greatly admires the coach and his direction. Coach Martin sees both Epenesa and Chapple as having nothing but the brightest of the futures athletically and academically in college. He believes the future is unlimited for both on the football field as they move toward college.

Coach Martin said he is going to get down to the basics of throwing with both Chapple and Epenesa in coming days and he expects people to see both performing at high levels as the season moves ahead.

"I anticipate a good year for both of them," Coach Martin said of his two boys in the weight events.

