

SPREADING LOVE OF TRACK AND FIELD: Coach Lakatos, assistants introduce sport to area youth

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE - One of the goals of **Edwardsville High School head boys track coach Chad Lakatos** is to spread the love of track and field not only to high school kids but to the elementary and middle school levels alike.

On Friday night, Lakatos and company held their first summer youth track and field meet at Edwardsville High School. Lakatos has been exceptionally successful as a track and field coach, first at Herrin, winning back-to-back state track and field championships there in 2007 and 2008, and in Edwardsville in 2015. Lakatos' boys placed second in the IHSA Class 3A Meet recently.

The coaches who win state championships in high school competitions know a good program starts at the elementary level and progresses its way up. Lakatos is right at home instructing youth and he beams all night long during the youth track and field meet encouraging them.

"I want to expose kids to the sport of track and field," he said. "That is my main goal with these summer track meets and the camps. In many schools kids don't get this opportunity until they are in middle school or maybe even high school. I want to expose the kids to something different and I think this meet and the camps do that."

Joining Coach Lakatos are his assistant coaches and many of his track and field athletes. **State discus champion A.J. Epenesa** was all over the track and also in the discus area working with youth in the softball throw, javelin and he even coached a relay team.

"A.J. and the other young athletes understand even at an elite status they have to give back to the kids," Lakatos said. "They are major role models for these kids. They may not understand that, but the coaching staff does. It is great for our high school athletes to volunteer their time and support the younger kids. I sent a bunch text messages out after the meet thanking them for their help and they all thought it was important to support the younger kids."

On June 24, Lakatos and the other coaches will host a second youth track and field meet at EHS and he encouraged other athletes to sign up for the competition. He said during that meet there would be some different events from the 100, 400, 1,600, long jump and more. The youth competed in the 40, 800, high jump, softball throw and family relay events on Friday night.

Head EHS boys and girls cross-country coach George Patrylak said the event is great for the kids and families alike.

"When Coach Lakatos came over here one of the things he wanted to provide were some opportunities for youth and for the community to be exposed to track and field,"

he said. “This is one of those events where some of the younger boys and girls can get a little bit of a taste for what track and field is all about. There are several of the athletes who are some of our high school athletes now. Some get the competitive juices flowing with this event. It is good to see some of the parents and kids together out here having fun.”





