

Edwardsville's A.J. Epenesa ends storybook football career with fond memories of journey

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – When the history books on the **Edwardsville High School athletic program** are written, the name **A.J. Epenesa** will stand out prominently.

Epenesa, a three-sport star for the Tigers in **football, basketball and track and field**, saw his high school football career come to an end Saturday afternoon with the Tigers'

38-21 loss to Glen Ellyn Glenbard West in the IHSA Class 8A football quarterfinals at Tiger Stadium.

The loss ended EHS' season at 10-2. "You can't be disappointed with a season like this," Epenesa said. "It's disappointing how it ended; my teammates worked hard and we fought to the very end; we executed to the very best of our ability and tried to play our game. It just wasn't meant to be for us today."

"They're a very good team and I wish them success in the future. We'll just come back for those guys and it's sad I won't be here anymore."

Epenesa, who has committed to Iowa for next season, will have many fond memories of his time in a Tiger uniform. "I came here and started as a freshman," Epenesa said. "It's kind of hard leaving as a senior. I'm trying to keep my head up and keep moving so the other guys can see how to hold yourself with honor and dignity."

"It will get better, but it's just a game. It's a lifestyle, but it's just a game of football. My advice to the guys is to live your life but enjoy football while you have it."

Epenesa now moves into the Tiger basketball season, where the Tigers are expected to be one of the area's top teams. "I'm very excited for the basketball season," Epenesa said. "I was trying not to focus on it too much during the football season; it's time for basketball season now, but this will be a memory forever, this playoff run, and basketball season will be one to remember."

"I feel like we can have a lot of success this year, and I'm very excited."

Being a part of one of the St. Louis area's top athletic programs is something Epenesa feels privileged to be a part of. "There's no place else I would have wanted to go to high school," Epenesa said. "People said we should have gone to a bigger school, like go to a school in Chicago or a big school in St. Louis like Chaminade."

"Edwardsville's just as capable of bringing people to the next level as any other school as long as you can prove yourself to be ready for it. I honestly don't think there are any coaches in high school that are better than them."

