

Tigers boys track team shows dominance, captures team title at Belleville West Invitational

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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BELLEVILLE - Edwardsville's boys track team flexed its muscles on Saturday and showed its strength in the highly competitive Norm Armstrong Belleville West Invitational Meet, taking top honors with 94 points, over second-place East St. Louis with 83 points.

Cahokia placed third with 77 points, while Homewood-Flossmoor was fourth with 74 points. The meet featured competitors from across the state with some of the best from Southern Illinois and the Chicago area in attendance. Edwardsville is loaded with talent in multiple events and this was the first time the Tigers have been able to showcase nearly the full squad because of injuries.

State champion Travis Anderson was back on the track on Saturday and he raced to first place in both the 110-meter high hurdles (14.10) and second place in the 300-meter low hurdles (39.46). Anderson had been nursing a hamstring injury early in the season, but to record a time of 14.10 in the 110-meter highs was remarkable for his first time out, Edwardsville head boys track coach Chad Lakatos said.

“I also thought Travis ran a good No. 3 leg of the 4 x 100 relay,” Lakatos said. “It’s good to have Travis back in the lineup. He is just one of those athletes that without him the dynamics of the team does change. It’s good to have him back running healthy. We had just about the entire group, so we were able to go in the direction we want to head in.”

The Tigers’ A.J. Epenesa tossed the discus 187-10 to capture first place and he was third in the shot put with a toss of 56-4.5. Carbondale’s Sam Sikon won the shot put with heave of 65-0.25, smashing the previous Belleville West Invitational record.

Epenesa, the defending state champion in the discus, won the event at Belleville East with a throw of 187-10.

“A.J. had a great meet, contributing 18 points,” Lakatos said. “He threw 187 in the discus with just a few days of practice under his belt and to throw 56 feet this early in the season in the shot put is impressive.”

In the shot put, where Epenesa was the state runner-up last season, he placed third on Saturday with a throw of 56-4.5. Sam Sikon of Carbondale, the defending state champion in Class 2A, won the event with a meet-record throw of 65-0.25.



Blake Neville continued to show his athletic prowess, clearing 14-1 in the pole vault and narrowly missing 14-6. The 14-1 vault was the best of Neville's career. Neville said after his last attempt that he was pleased with his performance, but hopes to creep up to

the 15-foot range soon. Neville will be competitive in the IHSA state post-season series if he continues his climb in the pole vault.

“For Blake to win that event at this type of meet says a lot,” Lakatos said. “We are excited about his performance.”

Devonte Tincer continued to impress in his events, capturing the long jump in a strong field with a 23-4.5 and he also cracked the Edwardsville boys school record of Cameron James set in 2011 with a clocking of 21.68 in the 200 meters for second place.

“Devonte had a great day and also ran a solid leg of the 4 x 100 relay,” Lakatos said.



Roland Prenzler continued to be impressive in the distances, placing second in the 3,200 with a time of 9:41.34.

“Roland ran well in the 3,200,” Lakatos said. Lakatos also singled out Bruce Wachowski for his fourth in the discus (151-1) and Daval Torres, who placed fifth in the 110-meter hurdles (15:22).

Lakatos said the Belleville West Invitational is probably now the second best boys meet of the season compared to the IHSA state meet with the quality of teams there.

“We are happy with the performance,” Lakatos said. “I told the kids they just need to continue to work hard. No one will hand us anything and at the end of the season we will have to earn everything we get.”

The Tigers return to action at the Granite City Invitational at 4 p.m. on Friday.





