

# **STATE CHAMPS AGAIN: Edwardsville's track and field team captures second 3A title in three years**

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer  
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CHARLESTON – Edwardsville's boys track team overcame adversity Saturday and found a way to get the job done, getting 37 big points from Travis Anderson, A.J. Epenesa and Matt Griebe en route to winning their second IHSA Class 3A championship in three years at Eastern Illinois' O'Brien Field.

It didn't come easily after Friday's qualifying session left them without their 4x200 relay team and without Epenesa in the shot put when they did not advance into Saturday's championship sessions, but Epenesa uncorked a 197-11 toss in the discus throw on his final throw of his high school career and Anderson and Griebe finished 1-3 in the 110 hurdles before Anderson won the 300 hurdles, helping the Tigers to a 42-point total, three better than Southwestern Conference rival East St. Louis; Bloomington took third with 32 points, Hoffman Estates fourth at 29 and West Aurora and Homewood-Flossmoor tied for fifth with 28 points each.

“We've got great kids and great coaches,” said Tiger coach Chad Lakatos. “You put them together and sometimes you put together great teams. We fought through adversity and our kids stepped up and did what they needed to do; it's a great way for these seniors to finish their high school career.”

The 30 points from Epenesa and Anderson meant much to the Tigers, Lakatos felt. “Those have been our big dogs,” Lakatos said. “We knew coming in from last year that we had those points coming back. A.J. struggled a little bit in the shot and even in the disc, but he stepped up on his last throw and popped out 197-11 to get the title in the disc.

“Anytime you can put big points together in a state meet, it can go a long way. I couldn't be happier for this group of kids. Hats off to East St. Louis; it's a great program and congrats to what they accomplished as well.”

In the field events, Blake Neville finished tied for 12<sup>th</sup> in the pole vault with a 13-6 effort on the day while Justin White finished 22<sup>nd</sup> in the high jump with a 6-1 leap before Epenesa's final throw in the discus, unloading a 197-11 effort on his final throw to repeat as state champion in the event, defeating Lockport Township's John Meyer, who had a 189-5 throw on the day.





Roland Prenzler took 23<sup>rd</sup> in the 3,200 meters, turning in a 9:48.18 to open the running events for the Tigers before Anderson (who repeated as state champion in the event) and Griebe got 17 huge points for EHS when Anderson won the 110 hurdles in 13.79 seconds and Griebe finished third at 14.55 seconds; Anderson then got 10 more huge points when he took the 300 hurdles in 37.83 seconds ahead of Palatine Fremd's Jaden Jackson, who turned in a 38.06 clocking.



DeVonte' Tinchler then stepped with a five-point performance in the 200 meters, taking fifth and scoring enough points to clinch the title for Edwardsville with a 21.97 time in the event.



Granite City also had a runner in the finals, Will O'Keefe scoring the Warriors' only point of the day with a ninth-place finish in the 800 as he covered the distance in 1:



55.17.

In the Class 2A competition, Jersey's Ben Flowers closed out his high school career with a fifth-place finish in the 1,600 meters, turning in a 4:20.87 while Roxana's Jordan Hawkins had a fourth-place finish in the discus throw, turning in a 177-7 effort in the event.

Freeport and Normal University tied for the championship in Class 2A with 37 points each to be declared co-champions, with Maple Park Kaneland third at 33 points, Geneseo fourth at 31 points and Cahokia having a six-year run atop Class 2A come to an end as the Comanches took fifth with 30 points.

In Class 1A, Carthage Illini West had 61 points to easily outdistance Colfax-Ridgeview, who had 34 points, for the championship. Forreston, who co-ops in track with Polo, was third at 31 points, Decatur St. Teresa, New Berlin, Rockford Christian and Sterling Newman Central Catholic all tied for fourth at 28 points each.

