



The Ultimate Tiger: Aaron Valentine inspires EHS football, basketball players every day

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE - When the Edwardsville Tigers take the field in either football or basketball, one of their inspirations is always Aaron Valentine, one of the team managers.

Valentine is the ultimate Tiger fan and has supported the team on the field for several years. He graduated from high school in 2008 and has been a fixture on the sidelines since his high school days.

Aaron was interviewed on the sidelines at an Edwardsville football practice this week and admitted he loves the Tigers.

Asked which is his favorite sport, either football or basketball, he replied simply: “Both,” meaning he couldn’t pick a favorite, he loves them equally.

Aaron also deeply respects Edwardsville head football coach Matt Martin and head boys basketball coach Mike Waldo. When asked to describe both of them he said: “They are both bossy,” and chuckled afterward.

Valentine then said, “They are both great,” describing what kind of coaches Martin and Waldo are at the high school.

Aaron said his favorite all-time Edwardsville football players were both A.J. Epenesa and Vincent Valentine, and his favorite all-time Tiger basketball player is Mark Smith.

Coach Martin said Aaron is a cousin of former EHS graduate Vincent Valentine, now a player in the NFL.

“Aaron is a character,” Martin said. “He is all about the Edwardsville Tigers. He gets excited go come to practice and games and is a big fan of all the kids and coaches. He loves it.

“The kids enjoy Aaron as much as he does them. We all kid him but Aaron’s heart is always in the right place. He is 100 percent about the Tigers.”

Coach Martin said the big picture for him and the other coaches is to improve all the kids in the program.

“We try to help young men become young adults,” he said. “Some won’t have a lot of playing opportunity, but the football program is still good for them. Football is always something special in Aaron’s life.”

Coach Waldo said Aaron Valentine is an inspiration to all the kids in the basketball program because of the way he approaches life and how he has overcome some developmental disabilities.

“Aaron is a team manager and he comes to practices and most of the games,” Waldo said. “The kids and the players really like him and I think one of the reasons is he is a very inspirational person. He always has something good to say and is also a very funny and witty guy.

“Aaron works for a pair of workshops in both Granite City and Alton and works hard every day, Waldo said.

In post-game interviews, Waldo doesn’t always focus on the leading scorer, but he always mentions those off the bench and contributors on defense. He constantly talks about how important the scout team is to the squad overall because of what they do in practice. He is of the belief every person on the team is important to the group’s overall success.”

“Most of us go through life and try to emulate a lot of traits of in people,” he said. “I have always said to have a good team it takes everybody, including those who practice and help with preparation. A lot of our scout team members for three years end up being very successful in life.”

Waldo said Aaron has worked very hard to communicate properly and moves well on his crutches, always confronting his developmental disabilities in a positive fashion.

“Aaron has made himself strong physically with just the sheer will of moving,” Waldo said. “He works so hard to be physically independent. He is an inspiration to the guys. The players really respect and admire his determination and his heart.”

