

Tigers' Parker signs with Louisiana-Monroe, Viehman with Illinois Wesleyan for football

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
April 13 2018 10:28 AM





EDWARDSVILLE – Edwardsville High's football program has been one of the top programs in the St. Louis area – if not the state of Illinois – for many years; it has produced many players who have moved on to the collegiate level prepared for the challenges that await them.

The Tigers sent two more of their players to the collegiate ranks in a ceremony Thursday evening at the EHS campus, with Devin Parker signing with Louisiana-Monroe, a NCAA Division I Football Bowl Subdivision school in the Sun Belt Conference with Appalachian State, Georgia Southern, Louisiana-Lafayette, South Alabama and Arkansas-Little Rock; and Chase Viehman signing with Illinois Wesleyan in Bloomington, who play NCAA Division III football in the Collegiate Conference of Illinois and Wisconsin with Augustana College in Rock Island, Millikin University in Decatur, Wheaton College in Wheaton, North Central College in Naperville and Carthage College in Kenosha, Wis.

Both Parker and Viehman made many contributions to last year's football team, recovering from a 0-3 start to finish 9-4 and reach the IHSA Class 8A playoff semifinals before losing to Loyola Academy.

Parker stepped in as the Tigers' kicker in 2017 after Riley Patterson graduated and went on to kick at Memphis. “I think I have a great chance to come in and start my freshman

year,” Parker said. “Their starter just graduated and it's going to be a competition between me and another senior; hopefully I can come out on top.

“Being a kicker, you can make a big difference in a game; football is a lot about field position – punt-wise, you can do that or put points on the board, either by a PAT or a field goal; either way, it helps the team.”

Heading to Louisiana will place Parker in a very different environment, but it's something he's looking forward to. “It'll be a lot of different down south; there's a lot of people that support the school and the football team,” Parker said. “Football's a big part (of the environment) down there – it's what most of the people at the school go to and enjoy a lot.

“It brings a lot of fans.”

“After Riley Patterson graduated, Devin stepped up and did a great job for us,” said Tiger coach Matt Martin, “both in punting, kickoffs and placekicking; he got his chance this year and made the most of it.

“It really started in the off-season with the weight room and the camps he went to and all the extra time he put in on his own; I was proud of him.”

That he's heading to a Division I school like ULM is a good situation for Parker, Martin believes. “It's a good situation; he's walking on there and he'll get a chance to compete – anytime a kid has a chance to go to school and follow his passion, which in this case is football, and get an opportunity to keep playing, I'm excited for.”

Parker came through for EHS in some big situations during the year, most notably in the Class 8A second-round win at Palatine when he connected on a field goal with 48.5 seconds left to give the Tigers a 48-45 win to move them into the quarterfinals. “He played a lot of games this year,” Martin said. “We started off rough and he was a big part of our success; special teams is always a part of our success and Devin was a big part of our special teams.”

Viehman anchored a tough Tiger defense that came up big when needed as the season went along. “I think the main thing was the academics there,” Viehman said when asked what attracted him to IWU, “and the tradition there.”

Being a part of the EHS football program has meant much to Viehman. “It's meant so much to me,” Viehman said. “It made me the man I am now, just the structure that all my coaches, leading up to coach Martin – you work for everything; that's what I really did this season and it paid off.”

“That's a great fit for him,” Martin said of Viehman heading to IWU. “Chase is the (definition) of a student-athlete; I think he'll get to play a good caliber of football there and he'll get a great academic experience and a degree from a great school – what an opportunity for him.

“You have that small-school feel, but it's in a good-sized town, everything I think a young man would be looking for. I think he made the right choice for him.”

Viehman made many big contributions to the 2017 Tigers. “He was our defensive MVP,” Martin said. “He was usually game in and game out our most productive defensive player; he worked hard in the weight room in the off-season and made himself a player of the game.”

That Parker and Viehman are heading off to college thanks to their efforts on the football field – two of many Tigers who have parlayed their high school efforts into advancing to the next level – says something about the program, Martin believes. “Because of (Viehman's) academics, he got a lot of money for that,” Martin said, “and he's going to go to a very good school relatively cheap and get to keep playing football.

“There's a lot of kids would love to continue to play and don't get the opportunity; Chase is another fortunate young man that does.”

As far as memories playing on the Tiger football team go, both Viehman and Parker will be taking many of them to their respective schools. “I'll be taking memories of working extremely hard in the off-season with all my brothers and in-season, working very hard and diligently,” Viehman said. “Of course, all the playoff runs – every single game a nail-biter, but always coming out on top except for the very last one.”

“I love Edwardsville football,” Parker said, “There's a great community support system here; there's much love for the team and all brothers just coming together. I'm going to miss coach Martin and coach (Kelsey) Pickering – all the coaching staff. It's a great place here.”

Parker plans in majoring in business at ULM, but is undecided about what part of business he wants to get into in the future; Viehman plans on majoring in finance at Wesleyan but may do a double-major in finance and another portion of business; he is leaning on working in finance after graduation.