

Tigers' Romano signs with EIU track /cross-country teams

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – Franky Romano has been a big part of Edwardsville's boys cross-country and track teams the past four years.

Romano, who also played football and wrestled for the Tigers during his time at EHS, moved up to the next level Wednesday afternoon in a ceremony as he signed a letter of intent to run for Eastern Illinois beginning next fall; the Panthers, located in Charleston – home of the state track and field meets – are members of the NCAA Division I Ohio Valley Conference with SIU-Edwardsville, Southeast Missouri State in Cape Girardeau, Mo., Murray State of Murray, Ky. and Tennessee State in Nashville, among other schools.

“I'm really looking forward to going to college at Eastern,” Romano said. “It'll be totally fun. My coaches were talking with (Eastern's coaches), so I got connected through there and I visited there a couple of times – that's where state was at, so I've stayed on campus there – and after my visit, I kind of knew that's where I was going to go; there's a great team there.”

The level of competition Romano will be facing in the OVC is another thing he's looking forward to. “I'll be getting good competition” in the league, Romano said.

Romano has many things he would like to achieve in Charleston. “Getting a good degree, obviously,” Romano said. “I just hope to improve and help my team as much as I can; I don't know what the whole plan is up there – I'm still figuring it out.”

Romano's sporting background included stints on the football and wrestling teams in addition to running cross-country and track before deciding to concentrate on running. “My junior year, I decided not to do wrestling anymore so I could train more for track.” Romano said. “At that point, I realized I wanted to do running in college rather than wrestling, so I kind of made that transition my junior year.

“I'm glad I focused more on track; it really helped me improve.”

EHS boys track coach Chad Lakatos felt Romano's decision to concentrate on cross-country and track also paid off for him. “I definitely think it benefits him and he's gotten better because of it,” Lakatos said. “Coach (George Patrylak, EHS cross-country coach) and coach (Dustin Davis, the assistant cross-country coach and track distance coach) do a great job with the cross-country program and they just continue to get better and they have a great core group of kids – a young group of kids – and Franky was the leader that this year and had a good year; he's started out the track season solid, so we're excited about what he's going to be capable of doing the rest of the year, but more important about Franky, it's about who he is.

“It's not about him being so talented, it's more about him just being a well-rounded good kid to coach.”

Lakatos sees Romano being a runner who can run a good number of distances for the Panthers. “He's proven he can move up to the 1,600 – he went 4:24 (in the Granite City Invitational) last week,” Lakatos said. “I think he's going to be very versatile; he'll be able to do a lot of things for Eastern, but more importantly, he's going to get a great education. To be able to do both is a dream come true for him, I'm sure.”

Romano will double-major in computer science and pure mathematics at EIU with plans to obtain an advanced degree in computer science; he's earned a good number of

scholarships to attend EIU in addition to the scholarships he'll have running for the Panthers; Romano was awarded the EIU Presidential Scholarship by the EIU Honors Council; the Jesse Allhands Mathematics Scholarship by Eastern's Department of Mathematics and Computer Science; the Dirty Dozen EHS Class of 1953 scholarship from the Edwardsville Community Foundation; and this year's Charles A. Wentz Jr. Engineering Scholarship by the Edwardsville Community Foundation.