



# **Freshman Cross County Runner Justice Eldridge Is Tom Lane State Farm Male Athlete Of The Month At Civic Memorial High School**

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer  
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BETHALTO - Freshman Justice Eldridge enjoyed a very good rookie season running for the boys cross country team at Civic Memorial High School. He climaxed it with a 19th-place finish at the IHSA Class 2A regional meet in Jacksonville, coming in with a time of 16:23.56 in helping the Eagles team advance, then followed up at the Olney Richland County sectional with a time of 17:57.77.

For his efforts on the cross country courses during the 2020 season, Eldridge has been named the school's Riverbender.com male Athlete of the Month for December, 2020.

Eldridge, who ran for head coach Jake Peal, ran on despite suffering an injury during the sectional, which he believed helped him receive this month's honor.

"I believe the success I had during the 2020 cross country season as a freshman led me to this award," Eldridge said. "I became the fastest freshman my coach has ever had. I also think the events that happened to me at the sectional race at Olney on Oct. 31 led me to this award. My hip was fractured during the race, but I still ran to the best of my ability."

Eldridge thanked his family and coaches for helping him reach the level of success he enjoyed during the season.

"I'd like to thank my older brother, Mark," Eldridge said. "He was the fastest athlete on the high school team in the last few years, and part of my inspiration as a runner. Also my brother-in-law, Kaleb. He was my training partner during the summer. Without him, I may not have had the success I did. Also my father. He has supported me and coached me a lot throughout my time as a runner. Also, my coach, Jake Peal. He has worked hard to train me to run to the best of my ability."

This past season was Eldridge's second season as a cross country runner, and being involved with the Eagles' team has taught him about what it takes to be a successful runner.

"It has shown me what it takes to be successful," Eldridge said. "It showed me the kind of work I need to do to achieve my goals."

Eldridge also plays baritone saxophone with the school's band, and also plays the piano, and does hope to continue with cross country in college, but has yet to decide what school he'd like to attend.

"I guess it almost depends on how fast I end up being," Eldridge said.

Eldridge has yet to decide on a specific major, but he does feel he has many options to choose from.

"I have had a lot of ideas on different things I've wanted to do," Eldridge said. "I never quite decided on which one I wanted to pursue. They include something in law enforcement or criminal justice, music, physics or astronomy. If I had the ability, I would make running into a career."

Although the track season was cancelled this past spring due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Eldridge also runs on the Eagles' team, and will be running in the 3,200 meters and on the 4x400-meter relay team.

*Riverbender.com's Athlete of the Month program is made possible by the generosity of our sponsors and the cooperation of our area high schools. This is a great accomplishment and one to be very proud of. Please join us in congratulating this young athlete. We at Riverbender.com wish you continued success in your future!*