

# Brandon Battle Becomes Statewide Sprint Phenom With Grace and Humility, Is iCAN Clinic Male Athlete Of Month For EHS

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EDWARDSVILLE - It has been multiple years since A.J. Epenesa and Mark Smith graced the Edwardsville High School campus and created a stir statewide and across the country for their football/track and basketball skills. Now, another new phenom has emerged in sprinter Brandon Battle.

The news is buzzing about Brandon Battle across the state and now the country.

This past Saturday, Brandon smashed the Edwardsville High School school record in the 400 meters with a time of 47.56, and eclipsed the 29-year Norm Armstrong Invite record. He also won the 200 meters in 21.46 and ran a leg on the winning 4 x 100 Tigers' relay.

Brandon Battle is the iCAN Clinic Male Athlete of the Month for Edwardsville High School.

Brandon's father, Marvin, was a long-time band director at EHS and now is a school administrator. Brandon's father beams with pride about his talented son.

The most impressive part about young Brandon is not his athletic skills, but he is humble, gracious and always polite. He also is an exceptional student and member of the EHS Marching Band. A.J. Epenesa, now a Buffalo Bills member, and Mark Smith, a college basketball player at the University of Illinois and Missouri, always were gracious to the media, fans and courteous.

Dr. Steve Stuart, the Edwardsville principal, said Brandon always answers "yes sir, no sir," and couldn't be more of a gentleman than what he is today. Dr. Stuart said Brandon's future is as bright as can be in college and beyond. Brandon signed recently to run for the Eastern Illinois University track and field program and hopes to achieve All-American status there. Brandon's 400-meter times are raising big eyebrows and not that far off high national level marks.

He is cordial about all his coaches and says: "Coach Lakatos, the head track coach, and assistants Alec Holler and George Patrylak all are the greatest coaches I could ever ask for. I just can't thank them enough for bringing me in here. It's been an amazing four years here."

Brandon broke the Illinois State High School record indoors with a mask on with a time of 47.8, under the 48.2 seconds mark. Jermar Collins of Wheaton Warrenville South ran a 46.2 in Illinois in 1996, the fastest time ever in that race. Brandon hopes to break that mark by year's end.

Darrell Robison of Tacoma, Wash., ran a 44.69 time in 1982 in the 400 meters.

Brandon said he has the utmost respect for Coach Lakatos, who has become legendary at EHS, with state championships and always fields competitive state track and field teams year in year out.

"Coach Lakatos has had me since I was a freshman and we have built a stronger relationship and trust with each other every year," Brandon said. "He is one of the greatest coaches I have ever had."

"My dad tells me every day to keep it real and he makes sure I keep a level head," Brandon said. "I love him and wouldn't be here today without him or my mom."

"My goal is the state record in the 400 of 46.2 and to be state champion," Brandon said.

Even during the COVID-19 Pandemic, Brandon kept training rigorously. He missed a year of competing, but he has exploded this year in 2021.

“I am very thankful and happy about being able to compete this year,” he said.



