

DREAMS COME TRUE: Edwardsville celebrates its IHSA Class 3A state track and field title

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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[Photos from Edwardsville's state championship journey at state and return home.](#)

Edwardsville's boys track team saw their hard work pay off with the school's first IHSA Class 3A championship Saturday.

They celebrated their achievement at Winston Brown Track Complex Sunday afternoon with a reception attended by parents, supporters of the program and Edwardsville school and political officials, including Edwardsville Mayor Hal Patton.

The Edwardsville and Glen Carbon police and fire departments brought the team members aboard buses through Edwardsville and Glen Carbon with others following in parade fashion. The team and followers met at Cassens Elementary before departing for the high school. The Tigers came away with the state championship at Eastern Illinois University's O'Brien Field, enduring a long storm delay by scoring 55 points to easily outdistance co-runner-up Evanston, who had 37 points; the Wildkits were tied with co-favorite Naperville Nequa Valley for second. Plainfield Central was fourth and Oak Park-River Forest finished fifth.

“This is a special moment for Edwardsville High School,” said Tiger athletic director Brad Bevis during the ceremony. “They had come close two of the past three years (referring to second-place finishes in 2012 and 2014) and what happened yesterday was the result of a lot of hard work that went into the program.

“I was talking with Jim Wigger (who coached Alton to three state titles in 1963, 1964 and 1969) and Oscar Wallace (who was a track standout for the Redbirds in that era) while I was at the state meet, and they really complimented us for what we've got and what we've accomplished. But at the same time, we've got to remember to never to take anything for granted, that we've got to keep working for what we get. If you stop working and start taking things for granted, you can lose what you've achieved and never get it back.”

Edwardsville School Superintendent Dr. Ed Hightower also praised the Tigers' effort and achievements. “When I started here 17 years ago,” Hightower said, “the athletic program wasn't on a clear direction. We brought in coaches who bought into what we were looking to do here, bought into the excellence that we were seeking for the athletic program here.”

Hightower, a former basketball official who officiated in 12 NCAA Final Fours in his career, talked about some advice he got after he had reached his third straight Final Four. “I was talking to an individual after I had gotten to my third straight Final Four,” Hightower recalled, “and he told me that I had done something few had achieved and I was just scratching the surface of my potential.

“He told me to never give back an inch of the success that I had. Here, the kids have set the bar high and we've got winners in the classroom and in the community. We've set the model for other schools to emulate.”

“I'm really fortunate here,” said EHS principal Dennis Cramsey. “I get to see them both in and out of the classroom and in the community. All of them represent both the school and the community very well.”

“If there's one thing we talk about, it's about dreaming about what we can do and then setting goals to get there,” said Tiger coach Chad Lakatos. “We need them to keep dreaming and keep working for it, because those dreams can come true.”



