

Coach Martin works to get best out of his Tigers, Edwardsville hosts Quincy tonight

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
August 28 2015 6:20 AM



EDWARDSVILLE - Edwardsville head football coach **Matt Martin** is one of those coaches who understands how to capture the attention of his players and get the very best out of them each and every game.

Through the summer, Martin and the Edwardsville Tigers football crew worked

diligently weight training, conditioning and on fundamentals. Tonight at Edwardsville High School, it is show time and time to start hitting someone other than their own teammates.

“The bottom line is I always feel stretched for time,” he said. “There is never enough time to prepare. We are also getting to a point where we have to start playing other teams.”

The coach said it becomes more difficult to measure progress until things are tried out in a game situation against an opponent.

“It is tough doing nothing but practicing against yourself,” he said.



Offensively, the Tigers lost the likes of Dan Marinko, the All-State quarterback. Riley Jones will be the No. 1 quarterback for The Tigers, Martin said. “Obviously we replaced many of our wide receivers, our offensive line and our quarterback,” he said. “Our kids have a willingness to learn and have put in plenty of good effort on their parts so far in practice.”

The top name on the team this year is the heralded junior **A.J. Epenesa**, the mammoth 6-

5, 245-pound tight end/defensive end. Last year, Epenesa was all over the field, leading the team in tackles nearly every game, sometimes even lining up in the backfield. Martin expects great things from Epenesa this year and said he is one special athlete and player.



Nearly every Division I school in the nation has been recruiting Epenesa after his sophomore season and he is rated as one of the country's top potential players to sign. He finished second in the large schools state track and field meet in the discus and is also an exceptional basketball player for Tigers' coach Mike Waldo.

At a recent Edwardsville scrimmage, A.J. used his 6-5 height and soared in the air for a touchdown catch. Epenesa has leaping ability also demonstrated on the hardwoods that should be a thorn to most opponents. Martin simply wants to get the ball in A.J.'s hands this season.

"A.J. obviously has special gifts," Martin said. "We would be smart to get the ball in his hands. Good things happen when he gets the ball. This is through passing, the run, whatever. Defensively, A.J. has been a very good player for us."

Jordan Jones will be a receiver and defensive back for The Tigers. Quentin Dissen and Devai Torres will also be in similar roles.

Jones has worked hard all summer and appears primed for a solid season, Martin said.

“He has really matured and is working hard,” he said. “He will be a good player for us.”

Kendell Davis and Jackson Morissey should lead the Tigers’ running attack in the backfield.

“We will need to count on them,” Martin said of his backs. “I think we have some experience and especially in the early games we will have to lean on them with the other younger players.”

Jordan Jones, Chris Colley, Cyress Ahart and Desmond Chapple are returnees, who should lead that group.

Chapple played a lot last year and should be an explosive player this year, Martin said.

The Tigers don’t have any film to view of this year’s Quincy team with both teams not having any games yet.

“They normally run a lot of double tight end sets and smash mouth football,” Martin said. “We will have to stay with our keys and reads.”

Quincy has a good coach and their kids play hard,” Martin added. “We will enjoy playing at home.”

Martin encouraged the faithful Tigers fans to turn out tonight at Edwardsville High School to see the 2015 edition of football squad.