



# A.J. EPENESA

## DEFENSIVE END

# 57

**6-6** **260** **ROOKIE**



**SEPTEMBER 15, 1998 (AGE 22)**



**EDWARDSVILLE, IL**



**EDWARDSVILLE HS**



**IOWA**



**DRAFT: 2020 (2ND RD)**

## SHOUTOUTS

- Posted the first sack of his NFL career vs. the Rams Jared Goff (9/27/20).
- A three-year starter at Iowa, tallied 26.5 sacks, 8 forced fumbles and 8 passes defended, along with 101 tackles.
- Was named first-team All-Big Ten in 2018 and 2019 after earning freshman All-Big Ten honors in 2017.
- Recorded 11.5 sacks, 14.5 tackles for loss and 4 forced fumbles in 2019 to earn 2nd-team All-America honors from the Associated Press.
- Twice posted 2.5 sacks (vs. USC in Holiday Bowl, 12/27/19 and vs. Minnesota, 11/16/19), a career high.
- Packed the stat sheet in 2018 by leading the team in tackles for loss (16.5) and sacks (10.5) while recording 37 tackles, 4 passes defended, 88 QB pressures, 4 forced fumbles and a blocked punt.
- Had 8 tackles, a strip sack that he returned for a 19-yard TD, and a blocked punt at Illinois (11/17/18).
- Recorded 15 tackles along with 5.5 tackles for loss, 4.5 sacks and one forced fumble as a freshman in 2017.
- Earned All-America honors during his final three years of his high school career and helped his team to an overall record of 40-6.



## FIRST-AND-10

**A.J. EPENESA** (EPP-uh-NESS-uh) was selected by the Bills in the 2nd round (54th overall) in 2020 after a productive three-year tenure at Iowa, where he compiled 26.5 sacks, including 11.5 in 2019.

## IF YOU HAVEN'T 'HERD'

### HOOP STAR

A three-sport star growing up, Epenesa played on the St. Louis Eagles AAU basketball team that featured the Boston Celtics' Jayson Tatum and former Iowa star Tyler Cook, who played for the Cavaliers. "His athleticism is freaky," Cook told The Athletic. "When I was in eighth grade, I promise you A.J. was better than I was. I'm not going to lie about that at all. A freak athlete, man. People don't know how skilled of a basketball player he was, too. He could shoot it, put it on the deck... I talk to him about it every time I see him."

### IT CAN ONLY BE JARED

According to a story by The Athletic, A.J. Epenesa's middle name, Jared, came from his father's best friend in college. Former DT Jared DeVries used to lend his car in college to Eppy Epenesa, so he could drive 50 miles to see his fiancée (now wife) Stephanie and their newborn daughter, Samantha. "Naming him after Jared has to do with my friendship with Jared, which will stick for life," Eppy said. "I'm glad I did that. It's a blessing just to have Jared as my friend."

## PERSONAL

Full name: Andrew Jared Epenesa. Is the son of Stephanie and Espensa "Eppy" Epenesa. His father, a native of American Samoa, played DT at Iowa. Has a sister, Samantha, and two brothers, Eric and Iose. Majored in communications. Fan of the St. Louis Cardinals. Played football, basketball and track in high school, scoring over 1,000 points in basketball and earning All-America honors as a discus thrower.



### IF YOU HAVEN'T 'HERD'



### AIGA MEANS FAMILY IN SAMOA

Epenesa's twitter bio contains the flag of American Samoa. His Instagram account is @supersamoan94. The roots run much deeper. His father, Eppy, grew up in Pago Pago, Samoa and that lineage is ingrained his life. Because of that, family is first for the Epenesas and A.J. is tattooed with birds, tortoise shells, fish, and leaves, all symbols of the Samoan culture. "I didn't have much exposure to Samoa growing up in Illinois," A.J. said. "But my dad tried his best to put his culture into our lives so that I can really embrace it and take pride in it, which I do."

### MEMORABLE TAKEDOWN

Epenesa finished his three-year career at Iowa tied for 4th on the school's all-time sack list with 26.5. His first career sack occurred his first career game on September 2, 2017 vs. Wyoming. The quarterback happened to be his Bills teammate Josh Allen. Upon being drafted by the Bills, Epenesa reflected on that play, "To this day, there's no quarterback that I've had to sack that was tougher than Josh Allen. He was really hard to bring down." Allen, meanwhile, tweeted after the draft pick was made, "I was playing the long game, wanted him to be a Bill..."

## THE STAMPEDE

#### FIRST JERSEY OWNED:

Tim Dwight, Iowa

#### FIRST JOB:

Worked in the garage in a tire shop

#### DREAM SPORTS EVENT TO ATTEND AS A FAN:

Game 7 of World Series

#### FIRST FOOTBALL TEAM:

Little Tigers in Edwardsville when I was 10 years old

#### BIGGEST PET PEEVE:

People who don't wave back

#### BEST ADVICE RECEIVED:

From my father who said "Be confident in yourself"

#### FAVORITE MOVIE:

Dark Knight

#### FAVORITE VACATION SPOT:

Samoa

#### NUMBER ONE ITEM ON BUCKET LIST:

Travel to Philadelphia to get an authentic Philly cheesesteak

#### HIDDEN TALENT:

Plays the ukulele



#### A SKILL HE WOULD LIKE TO LEARN:

Speak different languages

#### FAVORITE LATE NIGHT SNACK:

Banana bread

#### FAVORITE FOOD:

Steak

#### IF HE COULD GO PRO IN ANOTHER SPORT:

Shooting guard for the Los Angeles Lakers

#### FAVORITE SPORTS MOVIE:

Remember the Titans

#### FAVORITE APP:

Clash Royale game

#### FAVORITE CEREAL AS A KID:

Cap'n Crunch

#### FAVORITE TV SHOW:

Game of Thrones

#### NICKNAME:

Eppy

