



DE | 57

# AJ EPENESA

AGE: 26 (September 15, 1998) | HT: 6-6 | WT: 260

COLLEGE: Iowa

NFL EXP: 5 Years

HOMETOWN: Edwardsville, IL

ACQUIRED: Draft (2020, R2)

[ajepenesa24](#)

[supersamoan94](#)

## FIRST-AND-10

**AJ EPENESA** re-signed with the Bills in 2024 on a two-year deal after finishing his fourth season in Buffalo in 2023. Epenesa was selected by the Bills in the 2nd round (54th overall) in 2020.

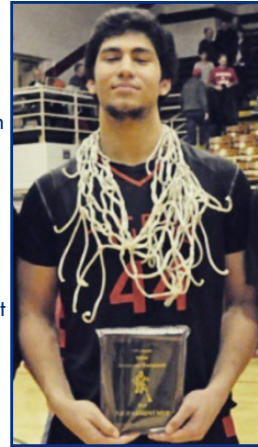
## SHOUTOUTS

- Registered his first sack of the 2024 season vs JAX (9/23/24) and also collected four QB hits.
- Tied his career high in sacks (6.5) and TFLs (7), and recorded new career highs in tackles (20), passes defended (8) and INTs (2) in 2023.
- Intercepted Patrick Mahomes at KC (12/10/23) for his second INT of the season. Epenesa became the 12th Bills defensive lineman with 2 interceptions in his career, and only the third with multiple in a season, joining Ron McDole (2 in 1968) and Sean Moran (2 in 1997).
- Collected half a sack of Russell Wilson for his 6.5 sack of the season vs DEN (11/13/23) tying a personal season-high (had 6.5 in 2022).
- Recorded his fifth sack of the season, vs TB (10/26/23) taking down Baker Mayfield and collected a TFL.
- Collected a sack of Tyrod Taylor against the Giants (10/15/23) and totaled three tackles and one TFL.
- Had 2.0 sacks against the Jaguars (10/9/23) and defended 3 passes which both mark as a career-high. And first Bill since 2020 with defensive "trifecta" (sack/FF/FR) recording a strip sack of Trevor Lawrence.
- Recorded first career INT (Sam Howell) at WAS (9/24/23), and returned pickoff 32 yards for a TD, first DL to score on INT return since Aaron Schobel 9/14/09. The INT marked his first INT TD of his football career. His last TD came in college with Iowa in 2018 (11/17) on a fumble recovery vs. Illinois.
- Finished 2022 third on the team with 6.5 sacks, five passes defended, and two forced fumbles, all new career highs.

## 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 Celtics star Jayson Tatum and former Iowa star Tyler Cook. "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, an outside linebacker at Iowa, and Lose. 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 earned All-America honors as a discus thrower.



### 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 in 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."

### GO BILLS!!

A.J. had the opportunity to bring joy to lifelong Bills fan Frank Bonfilio of Cincinnati surprising him with two tickets to the Sunday Night Football game against the Bengals. Frank is the starter of a Bills backer group in Northern Kentucky where there are about 200 members and he sets up game days and events for Bills fan in Northern Kentucky. "We know BillsMafia is everywhere and having their support is amazing, with so many people like Frank it just makes it that much more special to know we have people committed to us as we are to them." Epenesa said.

## THE STAMPEDE

**Favorite TV show:** Game of Thrones

**Favorite movie:** The Dark Knight

**First job:** Worked in the garage of a tire shop

**Hidden talent:** Can Play the ukulele

**Bucket list item:** Make his own samurai sword

**Pregame ritual:** Eat 3 chocolate chip cookies and 2 glasses of milk



**Biggest pet peeve:** People who don't wave back

**Dream vacation spot:** Tokyo, Japan

**Favorite cereal:** Cap'n Crunch

**Gas station snack:** Peace tea and corn nuts

**Favorite video game:** UFC

**MLB Team:** St. Louis Cardinals

**First car:** 2004 silver Chevy Trailblazer

