

By Joe Henderson

Franklin High School has produced its fair share of great athletes over the years.

Luke Guth can certainly be added to that list as the two-sport star has made his mark at the school both as a basketball player and a baseball player.

But as good as he is on the basketball court, it's on the baseball diamond where he has really shined.

As a result, the senior pitcher/shortstop has been able to fulfill a lifelong dream, signing a letter-of-intent to play baseball at Vanderbilt, one of the top college programs in the country.

"It's all pretty exciting. I'm super pumped to get there and start the season," Guth said. "I had quite a few schools interested and I went through the process of talking to all of them, and the process was amazing. But once Vanderbilt contacted me, there was just a click there and I knew that's where I wanted to go."

The Commodores have advanced to an SEC-best 16 consecutive NCAA tournaments, including seven NCAA Super Regionals, and won two national titles in the last decade, so it was easy to see why Guth wanted to play college baseball at the Nashville, Tenn., school.

Guth will be following in the footsteps of another area baseball player. Former Titusville standout J.J. Bleday played for Vanderbilt and played for its 2019 team, which won the

NCAA title. Bleday was later taken No. 4 in the first round of the MLB draft by the Miami Marlins.

“Vanderbilt has been known to be a powerhouse in baseball, so it was super exciting to hear from them,” Guth said. “The atmosphere in Nashville is crazy and the coaching staff is well known too, so that was a big part of why I wanted to go there. Seeing that they’ve won some titles and having known J.J. Bleday and knowing he went to the school, that is also a very cool part of it for me.”

Guth has excelled as both a pitcher and shortstop with a potent bat to date, but he hopes to concentrate on pitching at the next level.

“They’ve asked me about being a two-way player, but their pitching coach, Scott Brown, is an incredible guy and I would like to go down there and be a pitcher only,” he said.

Franklin head baseball coach Brian Schmidt had nothing but high praise for his star player.

“He’s a great kid and a hard worker. Sometimes, the things he does off the field outweighs the talent he has on the field,” Schmidt said. “He’s a once-in-a-lifetime type of player to come through our program and he’s done a lot for the program. I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to coach a kid like that.”

Even at a young age, Schmidt thought Guth might be special. He often showed up at practice with his older brother, Zach, when he played baseball at Franklin.

“I first met Luke when he was only 7 or 8 years old when his older brother Zach played for me,” Schmidt said. “Luke would come to practice back then and he would watch the infielders from the side of the field. He would go through all the drills just as they did, so he was learning and trying to get better from a very young age, so we knew he was going to be good. Maybe not as good as he’s turned out to be, but he’s definitely put in the work to be special.”

Luke Guth is also a talented basketball player and helped the Knights win back-to-back District 10 Class 3A titles over the past two seasons. He averaged 13.9 points, 5.4 rebounds, 2.4 assists and 1.6 steals per game and was a second team all-region selection last year as a junior. As a sophomore, he averaged 10.0 points, 5.0 rebounds, 2.0 assists and 1.0 steals per game.

But with such a bright future in baseball, he decided to skip his senior season – and a chance to make the 1,000 point list – and focus on the upcoming baseball season.

“I’ve had the opportunity to coach Luke since he was 6 years-old. He’s just a great overall kid,” said Franklin head basketball coach Jason Fulmer, who also coached Luke as part of traveling baseball teams between the ages of 6-13. “You could tell at a young age he had the opportunity to be special. Having the opportunity to go play at Vanderbilt doesn’t come around often, so it speaks volumes about how much work he’s put into perfecting his game and how dominant he is, not just at the high school level, but at the travel ball and AAU levels as well.”

Despite not having a freshman season because of the pandemic, Luke received a scholarship offer from Vanderbilt as his play in travel ball and AAU helped him get noticed on a national level.

“Travel baseball and AAU were definitely a big part of me getting noticed on a national level,” Guth said. “Going to all those big tournaments, like say down south, there were a ton of college scouts there, so it was definitely good for getting me noticed.”

Schmidt agrees that Guth venturing outside of the state to play baseball helped him get national recognition, but he also appreciates his loyalty to the program as well.

“Luke’s dad and Zach took him outside of the state so he could showcase his talent against other top high school players, but he has always stayed true to his friends and to his high school team,” Schmidt said. “Luke would go out and showcase his talent against the best talent in the country, but at the same time, he would get into a car with his friends and head to a local game with his buddies all summer long.”

Once Luke was able to start playing high school baseball as a sophomore, he showed exactly why so many college programs were interested in signing him.

As a sophomore, Luke went 6-0 on the mound with a 1.39 ERA in 45.1 innings pitched. He gave up nine earned runs on 19 hits with 20 walks and 74 strikeouts. As a hitter, he batted .462 with 24 hits, 20 runs scored, 19 RBI, six doubles, two triples and two home runs.

He was even better as a junior, going 6-1 with a 1.17 ERA in 54 innings on the mound. He gave up nine earned runs on 23 hits with 10 walks and 129 strikeouts. At the plate,

he batted .435 with 30 hits, 30 runs scored, 19 RBI, 11 doubles, two triples and a home run.

His best outing was a complete game, two-hit shutout with 16 strikeouts over WPIAL champion South Park in the first round of the PIAA playoffs. Guth was named District 10's Player of the Year.

"All of my coaches over the years have been a ton of help to me," Guth said. "My family has especially been helpful, including my brother Zach, who helped me through this whole process. I couldn't thank them all enough."

As dominant as Guth has been over his career, Schmidt feels he could be even better in the future.

"Luke is a pure athlete, so he can do whatever Vanderbilt wants him to do," Schmidt said. "He definitely has not reached his maximum potential and the sky is the limit as far as his talent goes."