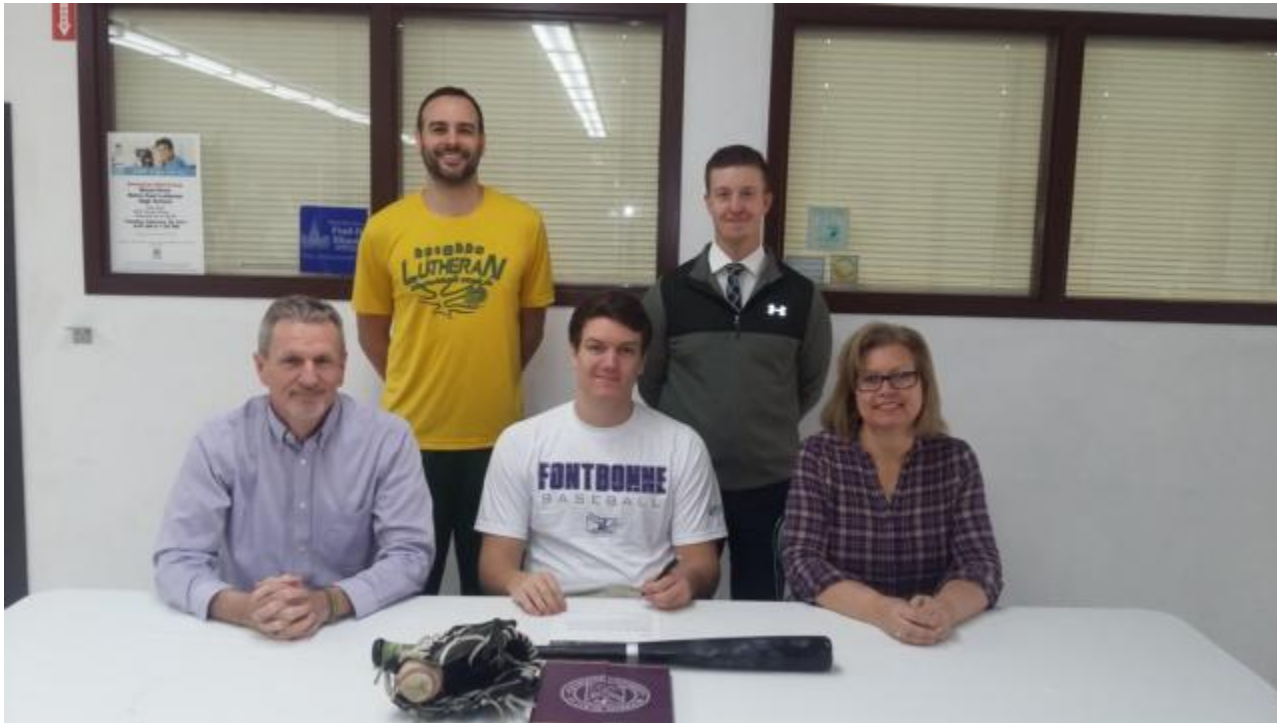


# Jump signs college letter of intent; also expected to be one of top MELHS baseball returnees

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer  
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**EDWARDSVILLE – Jake Jump** is expected to be a key portion of this season's Metro East Lutheran baseball team.

Jump recently signed a letter of intent to attend **NCAA Division III Fontbonne University in Clayton, Mo.**, next year; he will be pitching for the Griffins for the 2018 season. Fontbonne is a member of the St. Louis Intercollegiate Athletic Conference which includes schools such as Blackburn College in Carlinville, Greenville College, MacMurray University in Jacksonville and Webster University in Webster Groves, Mo.

Last year's edition of the Griffins finished the year 15-25 overall and 8-14 in the SLIAC under veteran coach Ryan Good.

“I got the chance to play baseball there,” Jump said. “I thought it'd be a great fit for me and I liked their academics as well. I think I've progressed (playing baseball with the Knights) since my freshman year; I've increased my velocity as well as my control and I've had a great chance to play here.”

Jump's interest in baseball began in his younger days; like many fathers and sons, Jump played in the backyard with his dad Jim. “I played in the backyard with my dad when I was two or three,” Jump said. “I've loved the game ever since; I played with different teams since I was young, some park and (recreation) leagues and select teams the different chances I've had the chances to play.

“Baseball has been mainly all my summers doing baseball. My best pitch is probably my fastball, sometimes my curve ball.”

Last year, Jump pitched 35.2 innings for the Knights, conceding 20 earned runs and 39 hits while striking out 30 and walking 20 for a 3.93 earned-run average; at the plate, he hit .250 with nine RBIs and three doubles. This year, he's expected to be the ace of the MEL pitching staff.

“It's an exciting time for Jake,” said new **MEL baseball coach Matt Pomerantz**. “He's one of the hardest working individuals, it not the hardest-working, individual there. I think it's going to be one of his best years yet; it's going to be an exciting time here.”

Pomerantz feels Jump's repertoire of pitches will just get better this season. “You're going to see an increased fastball,” Pomerantz said, “and two or three different off-speed pitches that's going to mesmerize hitters this year.

“He's going to continue to work hard and increase his velocity even during the in-season; he's got very, very good late-breaking movement. I don't think a lot of hitters are going to make contact on the barrel of the bat.”

Jump has been installed as the staff's leader this coming season, Pomerantz said. “The other players are already confiding in him, asking him for tips, like some of my other pitchers. He's going to be the go-to guy this year, no doubt.”

“I'm thrilled for him,” said former MEL head coach Joel Rempfer, who will be Pomerantz's assistant this coming season. “He's a good kid who's worked hard to make himself a good pitcher. I'm so excited he's got the opportunity to play at the next level.

“it's always good when you have a lefty who can throw hard and has a good curve ball; he's got both. He can keep hitters on their toes. Pitching is more than just throwing; it's very much a mental game and keep hitters off-balance.”

Rempfer believes Jump can be successful at the next level. “He's got the stuff as far as his pitches and everything else,” Rempfer said. “If he puts in the time and the dedication and the work – he's got being a lefty going for him.”

As far as being a possible big-league prospect goes, Rempfer said “we'll see how things pan out for him, but he's got a good pitch selection and everything else.”