

Redbirds' Nguyen signs letter with McKendree for baseball

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
May 5 2017 8:47 AM



ALTON – The last four years have seen quite many successes for the Alton High School baseball program.

Steven Nguyen has been one of those success stories; Nguyen came into the program as a freshman in 2014 and has made an impact on the Redbirds from the get-go.

Nguyen's effort and work ethic resulted in him signing a letter of intent to play for McKendree University's baseball team beginning in 2018, Nguyen signing the letter in a ceremony at Alton High Thursday morning. The Bearcats are an NCAA Division II school in the Great Lakes Valley Conference.

“The baseball organization is very, very good and the school offers a lot to me,” Nguyen said. “I see a lot of potential that can help me for my future.”

Nguyen plans on majoring in computer science at the Lebanon-based school.

“Computers are becoming the future of the world,” Nguyen said about why he decided to major in computer science. “We're expanding technologically and I feel it's going to make an impact on the world.”

Nguyen first played baseball when he was five years of age. “Ever since my first game, I fell in love with the game and wanted to keep playing,” Nguyen said; he's also been a member of the Redbird soccer program as well. “I love both sports (baseball and soccer); baseball attracted me more than soccer,” Nguyen said.

“This is a very special one for us,” said Redbird coach Todd Haug. “Rarely do we have someone who is a four-year varsity letterman; in my nine years here, we've had four kids that have received letters for four years. Steven is special in that he's one of those four.

“He came on and was an immediate impact player for us at the varsity level from his freshman year on; his versatility is what serves him well in that he's played everywhere on the field for us except first base and he hasn't caught for us, but he's pitched and played second, short and third and can play all three outfield positions. He just goes about his business and does what he can to help the team win.”

The Bearcat program, headed up by Danny Jackson, the former Edwardsville standout, is a good fit for Nguyen, Haug believes. “He's a true team player who's going to a solid program out at McKendree,” Haug said.

That it's close to home was an important factor as well. “It was important because of the importance of family,” Haug said. “Their family is very tight-knit; it was a contributing factor in their decision-making process to make sure it was close enough for mom (Lonnie), dad (Sam) and younger brother Simon to see him play.”

Nguyen has been one of the team's leaders this season, hitting .388 with 19 hits in 48 at-bats, including three doubles, a triple and two home runs with 15 RBIs and a .612 slugging percentage. On the mound, Nguyen is 3-0 on the season with a 1.20 ERA in 11.7 innings pitched, giving up two earned runs and striking out six.

Nguyen has battled shoulder problems in his time at AHS and worked hard to overcome them, Haug said. “He's had a variety of shoulder dislocations over the years,” Haug said. “It's kind of a wrong man in wrong position at wrong time, if you will, and some fluke accidents over the years; all the time, he just goes about his business – even through the

pain, he works his way back as best as he can and keeps fighting. It's a good symbol, not just in sports, but what you try to do in life.”

Nguyen's success is a testament not only to his work ethic, but to his family, Haug felt. “I just think it's a testament to his parents and how he was raised and the solid work ethic that they have,” Haug said. “There was a very great article done on him and his brother earlier this year just on bringing the Asian heritage that they have to a largely American sport and how they go about their business; it's just a kind of example to all of us – the term was used, 'quiet confidence' – they really do. They're very stoic and go about their business; they do their talking with their abilities.”

“I've been here for four years; having the chance and opportunity to represent the school itself, I'll remember that forever,” Nguyen said of the memories made being a part of the Redbird program. “I would like to thank coach Haug for taking me in my freshman year and teaching me a lot of things; all the coaches helped me learn over time.”