

# Drake Westcott Signs With National Power Louisville, Ready to Help Cardinals Soar Nationally

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer  
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EDWARDSVILLE - Edwardsville High School baseball first baseman Drake Westcott is one of the St. Louis area's most prominent players, and last Friday in a ceremony at the high school, he took the next step into helping one of the biggest names in college baseball continue to be one of the nation's powers.

Westcott signed a letter of intent to attend the University of Louisville, and will be joining the Cardinals roster in the spring of 2021. He'll be counted on to become one of the top players on the team, and possibly in the nation.

"It's a really big thing," Westcott said in an interview conducted on Wednesday. "When I visited, I fell in love with the place, and I knew that's where I wanted to go."

Westcott was also impressed by both the players and the coaching staff, which made his choice that much easier.

"I really like the campus," Westcott said, "but I really fell in love with the baseball program, the coaching staff is amazing, they're good every single year, and they produce a lot of professional baseball players."

Westcott is looking to major in either sports management or accounting, and has dreams of being either a player's agent or an accountant when his playing days are over. He also considered Mississippi, Alabama, Indiana and Purdue, among other top schools, before going with Louisville. His goals are very simple and straightforward, and he'll bring much to the table for the Cardinals.

"I hope to go down there, earn a spot in the lineup," Westcott said, "play in the College World Series, and eventually win it."

The College World Series, held every year in Omaha, Neb., is a much-anticipated event each year in the American sporting scene, and Louisville has played in the event in five of the last ten seasons. Westcott is hoping to bring his strengths as a player to assist the Cardinals achieve a possible national championship.

"I play both corner infield spots," Westcott said, "I hit, drive in runs, and produce."

That he does, and his signing is a really big thing for both him and the Louisville program. And it's also the culmination of Westcott's dreams since he committed to the Cardinals shortly into his freshman season with the Tigers.

"Yeah, I think that's been something that he committed during his freshman year," said Edwardsville head coach Tim Funkhouser, "I think it was about six games in, somewhere around there. So it's been a longer journey from that standpoint, but he's

been an excellent producer, and Louisville's program is amongst the top five in the country, and obviously, they were in the final three last year in the College World Series, and their coaching staff is top-notch. Eric Snider, one of their assistants, who used to be at Illinois, and I got to meet him through camps there, and I knew him even prior to him working at the University of Illinois, so it's good for one of our players to connect with him, and wants he got a call and came up right away, he really liked what he saw, we're looking forward to him having a strong year for us, and then moving on to the next level."

No matter what sport it is, the ACC is one of the top conferences in the nations, and richly deserves its Power Five ranking. It'll be a big plus for Westcott's development.

"Definitely one of the top two conferences in the country," Funkhouser said. "And they play outstanding competition throughout the season. Louisville's had a great following, and great player development, guys playing in the big leagues, and a lot of players playing in pro ball, so I think there's aspirations even beyond the college level, but there's a lot of guys that have come from Illinois that have done really well with Louisville. And I think their coaching staff creates a great environment for them to out there and compete, and it'll be exciting to see him wearing the Cardinal uniform.'

Funkhouser feels that Westcott might have a chance to break into the Major Leagues one day, or as it's referred to by many in baseball, "The Show."

"Yeah, you never know," Funkhouser said. "The big thing is you want to have goals and aspirations, and then, you want to focus on what you have in front of you at the time. But we've seen him here in a Tiger uniform, and he displays a great amount of power, and has ability to take really good at-bats, and his defense is continuing to improve annually, and something we really saw, his baserunning come into action last year. And I think as a player, you always want to just continue to enhance all those facets of your game, and then, see where it takes you. He's got a possible future within that, it's just going through the trials and tribulations of whether it's a high school season, whether it's a summer season of club ball, whether it's a college season or college summer, or even professional ball, I think they all have their different challenges. So it'll be fun to follow him after his EHS days.

"We're looking forward to the spring, and having him in a Tiger uniform, and our guys getting out there and competing again," Funkhouser continued. "He's been a part of two teams playing for the state championship, with last year culminating in that. He's really thrived in the postseason for us, and we look forward to back to battle in the spring."

And for his part, Westcott is looking forward to his final season with Edwardsville, and has very good memories of the year past in winning the IHSA Class 4A title for both the school and its very supportive community.

"Last year was great, winning the state championship for the school and the town," Westcott said. "I think this year, we'll really good, and we'll have a good shot of going back."

And his goals for the Tigers are both simple and straightforward.

"My goals, honestly, are to help the team win as many games as possible," Westcott said, "help the team, go back to state and win another state championship."