

Vandament enjoys home-run season

Senior captain's love for baseball drives work ethic, leadership

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Ethan Vandament's greatest baseball achievement is his first home run, something he had been working towards since his humble beginnings in Little League. When the day came, during the annual Fredricksburg High School-hosted tournament, Vandament notched not one but two home runs over the five games played. While a highlight of his baseball career, his impact on the baseball program can be felt beyond just at the plate or on the mound.

Vandament has been on the varsity team since his sophomore year, but that is far from where his journey with McCallum began.

"I was in seventh and eighth grade [and] I would always come down after school once [my brother Koehler] got his license," Vandament said fondly. "He would drive me home, and I'd just sit up there watching practices. I loved seeing Coach [Russell] Houston scream and watching the ball soar through the air and I just couldn't wait until I got my shot here."

While watching his brother was eye-opening, Vandament's love for the game of baseball started at a much younger age.

"I used to play soccer," Vandament said. "That was horrific with my arms and legs going everywhere. Then I started playing Little League, with [Jacob] Masters, and I knew that I found what I loved."

While some may see baseball as just a game, Vandament sees it as a way to meet others and forge relationships.

"There are so many different people that play this sport from different socioeconomic backgrounds; it doesn't matter if you're rich or poor," he said. "It's really a point of connection between people."

After his Little League epiphany, Vandament never stopped playing. He worked his way through Little League, Pony, and eventually to high school baseball. Despite making a mark on JV, his freshman year did not go exactly as planned.

"It was disappointing, to be honest, not getting pulled up for playoffs my freshman year—mainly just because I wanted to be on an actual team with my brother for once," Vandament said. "Oh, and I really wasn't

Vandament hits in the first round of the state baseball playoffs against Pflugerville. The Knights lost the first game 3-0 but went on to win the next two, 4-0 and 12-4, to advance to the area championship series. Photo by Grace Nugent.

Photos by Grace Nugent



ABOVE: Senior Ethan Vandament not only hit a bases-clearing RBI triple to drive in three runs in the top of the fifth to give McCallum the lead, but he also pitched a complete game with six strikeouts and five earned runs allowed in an 8-5 victory over 6A powerhouse Westlake that completed a 5-0 weekend at the AISD baseball tournament March 4-6.

TOP RIGHT: In a must-win Game 2 against Anderson at East View on Saturday May 1, Vandament had two quality at-bats before the weather forced the Knights and Trojans to pause the game with the Trojans up 3-1 in the top of the sixth. When the game resumed at Nelson Field on Monday, the Knights stormed back win 4-3 and force a third game to determine the top seed in the playoffs. Anderson won Game 3, 3-2. "It was a tough series," Vandament said. "But it was fun to play with guys I've known since Little League." BOTTOM RIGHT: Vandament pitches against Westlake. "The Westlake and the Regents games were big for me, and Antonian, since I hit a walk-off," he said.



even that good."

He's not good this year either. He's better than good. He is a starting pitcher, the team's lead-off hitter and serves as one of the team captains.

"While it may sound

cheesy,

he is the heart and soul of the team," longtime teammate and fellow senior Jacob Masters said. "In my opinion, he carries the biggest weight on his shoulders. He gets mad when we lose; he picks up his teammates when they're down and generally cares about everyone."

Head baseball coach Brandon Grant agrees.

"He works like he has a serious chip on his shoulder at all times," he said. "It's not just at practice; it's in the off-season; it's lifting every single morning. He holds his teammates accountable and to a high standard and sets the tone for the others."

Both on and off the field, Vandament

is a leader whether it's asking the guy on the bench with his head in his hands if he is doing OK or encouraging the team to talk it up, he makes his presence known.

"He is one of the most hardworking people on the team," Masters said. "I'd have to say that it's his generosity, empathy and consideration for others that sets him apart. He always understands what's going on with other people."

Vandament's team says he has a hunger and drive unlike any other.

"He goes into every game with our bull shark mentality," teammate Woody Middleton said. "I've gotten to lift with him in the mornings, and it's been a joy to see him improve as a player."

While Vandament thinks that his best game was the Regents game during the Fredricksburg tournament, his teammates and Grant disagree.

"He said Regents," Masters said with a laugh. "I would say his best game was either his walk-off home run against Antonian or the Westlake game."

Vandament had five RBI's in the Westlake game and pitched a complete game to earn the win.

"He [Vandament] gave up two home runs to the top part of their lineup, and in between innings he looked at me and said, 'That's the last one.'" Grant said with a chuckle. "Then the third

pitch of the following inning he gave up another bomb to left field, and he pointed to the dugout and said, 'That's the last one, I promise.'"

From then, Vandament mowed down the Chaps and hit a clutch RBI triple to win the game.

According to Masters, Vandament sometimes overlooks his successes and gets bogged down with his failures.

"I was so impressed when he hit that walk-off against Antonian, and that was a big moment for him because he always tells me he hates hitting," Masters said. "But especially over the last year, he's gotten pretty good at it, which is something he does not want to admit."

While Vandament still doesn't know where he will end up for college, he plans to try and play baseball for as long as possible.

"If I go to college and I get a degree and then my career is over, that's my life," Vandament said. "Where does baseball fit in? I don't want to live just the 9-5 hustle, I don't want regrets on what I could've been because I stopped doing what I loved."

While the high school chapter of Vandament's baseball career has ended, it won't be the last time he steps on the field as a player.

"As I get older I am just going to get slow, probably. Probably fat. Just out of shape," Vandament said. "So I'm just trying to enjoy it while my body allows me to do it. I know one day my body's just going to stop cooperating, and I plan on playing baseball until I can't anymore."

"He holds his teammates accountable ... and sets the tone for the others: a true leader."

— head coach
Brandon Grant