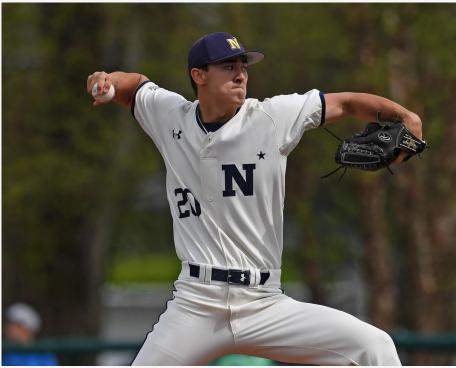
MLB prospect starts military commitment



by Stephen Ruiz (https://militaryfamilies.com/author/stephen-ruiz/)

September 20, 2020 (https://militaryfamilies.com/sports/mlb-prospect-starts-military-commitment/)



Noah Song. Source: Navy athletic department.

Noah Song did not enroll at the Naval Academy to become a professional baseball player.

First and foremost, he was focused on his education and becoming an officer. Improving his pitching repertoire was nice but not the primary goal. Like all Midshipmen, a military commitment awaited him upon graduation. Being drafted in the fourth round by the Boston Red Sox in 2019 altered that timeline only slightly.

From ballplayer to Marine

"It was supposed to be four years and done with baseball," Song said. "Everything after graduation has really just been a plus."

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Elijah Song. Courtesy photo.

Song, 23, reported to flight school in Pensacola in June, leaving behind an abbreviated stint last season for the Red Sox's Class A short-season, minor-league affiliate in Lowell, Massachusetts. Song put away his glove without complaint, not surprising considering his family's priorities.

His younger brother, Elijah, recently completed the Marines' Officer Candidates School in Virginia and is one year from graduating from Cal Maritime. Song's father, Bill, and older brother, Daniel, work for the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, and his sister, Faith, is a nurse.

"It seems like all the kids are gravitating to public service and servicing the country," Bill Song said. "They've really fulfilled everything that I would want from a child."

Elijah, 20, decided to become a Marine as a college freshman. He was interested in the military before Noah chose Navy but was impressed by watching how his brother matured there.

"To see him go through his transformation, just from a normal kid in high school to this refined military officer, ... it made me tell myself, 'Man, I want to be that squared away, that professional," Elijah said.\

Baseball wasn't always on this Navy grad's mind

Noah was not always that squared away, especially on the baseball field.

Navy was his only offer to play baseball after he graduated from high school in Claremont, California, about 35 miles east of Los Angeles. Scouts started paying attention during his junior year at Navy, and then Song blossomed as a senior, going 11-1 with a 1.44 ERA and 161 strikeouts in 94 innings.

He was among four finalists for the Golden Spikes Award, given to the top amateur baseball player in the United States.

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"I never really thought about [getting drafted] so much, because the mindset was just on becoming an officer," Noah said. "I completely agree with that. That's the complete reason we're there, so [the attention was] kind of weird."

While awaiting his flight-school orders, Noah was allowed to begin his professional career last summer. In seven games for Lowell, he allowed two earned runs in 17 innings for a 1.06 ERA.

"When he first got here, I don't think he was overly confident in who he was," Navy baseball coach Paul Kostacopoulos said. "He went from this kind of nervous, internal person to being a confident man, so to speak. It's always great to see."

Elijah was different.

He played golf in high school but was not that interested in sports. He enjoyed tinkering, once learning to load ammunition by researching it online and watching videos.

But mainly he loved flying. Aboard a Cessna 150, Elijah sat in the pilot's seat for the first time as a high school junior.

"Feeling the pedals and feeling the yoke and feeling the plane actually move from my control, that was just a life-changing experience," Elijah said.

Noah, whose future in baseball is uncertain, cherishes that view from the air as well.

He said his relationship with Elijah was tight-knit as children, but they were typical brothers. They argued. They fought. They made up.

"Looking back, it's all just fond memories," Noah said. "This military experience has definitely brought us a little bit closer than we used to be, just because we share a bond. We get to have that commonality between us, which is pretty cool."

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Stephen Ruiz (https://militaryfamilies.com/author/stephenruiz/)

Stephen Ruiz, 53, worked in the newspaper industry for more than three decades. During the past 21 years, he worked for the Orlando Sentinel as a writer, copy editor and high school editor in the sports department. He also served as an online producer. Stephen graduated from Louisiana State University with a bachelor's degree in journalism and enjoys reading, cooking and exercising. He has completed three marathons.

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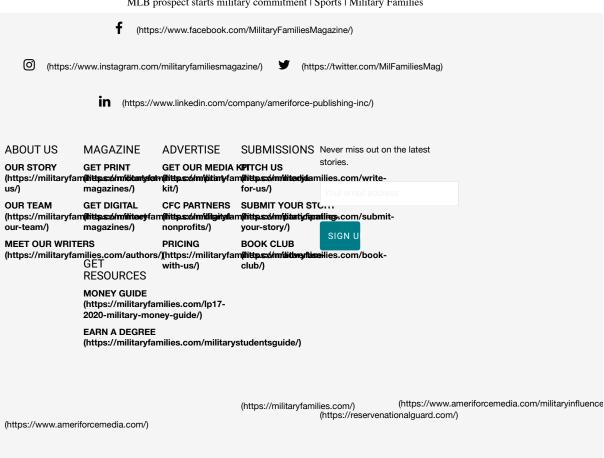






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