

# **Elon Club Baseball Senior Reflects on his Baseball Journey and Decision to End Playing Career**

*By Matt Shiffman*

Baseball has been a constant in James Renda's life for as long as he can remember. From tee ball to Little League, high school and finally the club level in college, Renda had played for large portions of every year since kindergarten. This year, he finally gave it up. I talked to him about his journey and where he stands now with his decision.

Growing up in West Hartford, Connecticut, baseball was at the core of Renda's life. Playing in the fall, spring and summer seasons, baseball was his main focus outside of school.

"When you spend that much time doing something, it kind of centers a lot of your life," Renda told me.

He had other hobbies growing up, playing the trombone, video games, or backyard football and basketball, but baseball took up most of his focus. Renda said that especially when he got to high school, his closest friends were the people he played baseball with.

These are people he is still close with today. I talked to a couple of them about him.

"Can't say enough good things about him," said Ben Brockway, a childhood friend.

He went on to explain how Renda is always there for him as one of his closest friends.

Joe Dooley, another childhood friend, commended Renda's resilience when an injury derailed his junior year. He remembered Renda having incredible energy their senior season and being one of the team's best hitters.

"I've played baseball with James since we were eight years old, and it's one of the many reasons he's one of my best friends in life," Dooley said.



Renda is picture on the far right, Dooley is holding the trophy. Brockway not pictured

Baseball shaped much of Renda’s childhood. Between the close relationships he built and the time commitment, it molded him into the person he was when he arrived at Elon. And yet, when he got to campus as a freshman in fall 2022, he had to be convinced to give club baseball a shot.

“My dad kept sending me the practice schedules, and I was like, well, I’m not involved in anything, I’ll give it a shot,” he said.

After attending a few practices that fall, Renda decided he wanted to join. He acknowledged that in high school he had accepted he wasn’t going to play Division I baseball and didn’t want to go to a division III school just to play. But that realization didn’t mean the itch to keep playing was gone.

Renda went on to play for club baseball for his first three years at Elon. Even in a more relaxed environment compared with growing up, burnout and time commitment weighed on him. He recalled a specific moment when he realized he was reaching his breaking point.

He recalled a memory of a 2023 football game between Colorado and Colorado State. Listen below to hear the story.

The Colorado State–Colorado game represented the sacrifice club baseball players make. Because games are on Saturday and Sunday mornings, weekend nights often get cut short. For Renda, that sacrifice stopped paying off after his junior year.

The time commitment made Renda put pressure on himself to perform and make the commitment worthwhile.

“It got to the point where a bad game would ruin the weekend for me,” Renda said.

One advantage club baseball member have is the roughly 50 social members who don’t play, giving players like Renda the option to stay involved without being on the field. Some members never intended to play at all and joined purely for the social aspect. Others, like Renda, can “retire” while staying part of the community.

This helps keep valuable members around. Senior Bennett Simpson, a pitcher for club baseball, explained the value Renda still brings without playing.

“James is great for club baseball. He’s a face all the younger guys can look up to and model themselves after,” Simpson said.

Renda is serving as Housing Chair on the executive board of the club as well.

**Elon Club Baseball**

Housing Chair

**James Renda**

Housing Chair

**Exec. Board (2025-2026)**

**E.U.C.B.**

James Renda

West Hartford Connecticut

**Housing Chair**

**Why E.U.C.B.**

EUCB has given me the opportunity to make life long friends while continuing to play baseball at a high level and having the best possible college experience.

**Favorite Player**

Curtis Granderson

**Favorite Team**

YANKEES

Via @Elon\_ClubBaseball on Instagram

Now that Renda has spent his first fall season in over a decade not playing baseball, I asked him directly whether he's happy with his decision.

"Yeah, I am," he said. "I feel like it was best for me."

He highlighted how important it is that he can still be around baseball and the club guys every weekend and said he loves watching the players compete this year.

It was simply time for him to stop playing.

Baseball will always be a part of James Renda and his story. Fall 2025 just marked the beginning of a new chapter.