

Lamb wraps up baseball career

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ANN ARBOR — Bedford graduate Jackson Lamb just couldn't catch a break during his first three seasons on the University of Michigan's baseball team. There was the back injury during Lamb's freshman season. Then Tommy John surgery knocked out most of his sophomore campaign. And during Lamb's junior year, it was broken ribs. "It was frustrating," Lamb admitted. "Coming in, I had pretty big expectations really. It was just frustrating; because I knew I was good enough and had the talent to play. That wasn't the thing keeping me off the field. "It was health, which was something I really never struggled with in high school." The fourth time was the charm for the son of Steve and Shawna Lamb.

Lamb went out with a bang in his senior season as a Wolverine. The All- Big Ten First Team and Academic All- Big Ten selection did not allow an earned run through his first 25 appearances, and allowed just three runs through 28 innings pitched with 28 strikeouts for a Wolverine team that went 42-15 and earned an at-large selection to the NCAA Tournament.

The former Gatorade Michigan High School Player of the Year also tied Michigan's all-time single season save record with 12 saves. "It finally felt like I got an opportunity to show what I was supposed to do," Lamb said. "If you look at my career stats, you can see even when I was on the field when I was healthy I produced. It was very frustrating not to be able to do it in mass quantities. This year I pitched three times the amount of previous seasons."

A 2013 graduate from Bedford, Lamb was a three-time first team all-state selection.

He was named the Michigan High School Baseball Coaches Association's Co-Mr. Baseball after his senior season in which he batted .516 with four home runs and 44 RBI, and went 9-0 with a 1.12 ERA and 90 strikeouts on the mound.

Lamb was drafted in the 20th round of the 2013 MLB Draft by the Texas Rangers, but he chose instead to head to Ann Arbor. He was drafted again after his junior collegiate season, this time in the 35th round by the St. Louis Cardinals. But again, Lamb chose to remain a Wolverine.

"Out of high school I don't think I was ready yet," he explained. "I don't think really any 18- year- old is ready to go into that. I don't think people realize the actual progression of minor league baseball and how grueling it is. "After my junior year I really wanted to come back. I really didn't have that successful year that I wanted, I knew we had a really good team coming back, and thought we'd be pretty good and wanted to add to that success." Finally ready to give professional baseball his undivided attention, Lamb went undrafted this past June. Lamb admitted his injury history probably scared many clubs away, especially considering he was dealing with yet another one as scouts were finalizing their boards.

"The draft is second to none in providing almost no reason for almost anything it seems like," Lamb said. "Before the draft we thought there was a possibility of going definitely the second day if not the third day. My shoulder was actually hurt going into the Michigan State weekend (in May), I was pitching through some more injuries and they just decided it was too much of a medical risk to invest money. "But while disappointed, Lamb doesn't blame teams for staying away. "I completely understand," He said. "It's a business. Why take something that's possibly broken?"

Lamb has officially put baseball behind him. Instead of returning for another season at Michigan, he has chosen to pursue a second bachelor's degree with the eventual plan of working in the speech-language pathology or audiology fields. After dedicating himself to his sport for so long, Lamb is excited to see what happens next. And while the experience didn't end with a professional contract, it did teach him a lot about life. "Probably my greatest take away is nothing really ever goes according to plan," Lamb said. "You have to always be ready to adapt.

"I don't think I'd take anything back. ... I don't regret anything."