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Headed to ETSU, Hilltoppers' Carter staying on diamond

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Will Carter has been a two-sport starter at Science Hill, but the decision to play baseball in college was a slam dunk after East Tennessee State made its pitch.

Carter signed Wednesday to play baseball at ETSU.

"Hard work can get you anywhere," Carter said, "and it's always been my dream to play for ETSU."

The 6-foot-2, 180-pound right-hander is 7-4 with a 2.74 ERA during his career at Science Hill. Carter has also played third base, shortstop and left field, and has batted .320 with 14 doubles and 43 RBIs in 65 games.

But the pitcher's mound is where there appears to be the most upside. Carter grew nearly two inches and gained some 15 pounds in the past year, which has helped his velocity increase from the low 80s to the mid- to upper 80s.

"I've just grown a little bit and I'm getting stronger," Carter said.

He's been likened to former Hilltopper Chas Byrne, who also pitched at ETSU and is beginning his second season in the Kansas City Royals organization.

"Everybody compares me to Chas," Carter said.

Byrne added roughly 10 miles an hour from ages 16 to 22. Carter hit 87 mph last fall in Murfreesboro and threw well in ETSU's fall league. Science Hill coach Ryan Edwards said serious interest from Middle Tennessee State and/or Tennessee Tech might have materialized.

"But he really wanted to stay close to here anyway," Edwards said. "I think when they (ETSU) saw him pitch this fall ... when they saw that I think they said, you know 'We better get him over here before somebody else sees him.'"

Carter could've tried basketball and baseball at Milligan College.

"I talked to Milligan a little bit about doing both, but I'd rather go to ETSU," Carter said. "That'd be really hard at Milligan (to play two sports), because they're a hard school, too."

Byrne's older brother Shane was a good basketball player who gave up the sport in high school to concentrate on baseball. He went on to a record-setting career as an outfielder at ETSU and played two years in the minor leagues.

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