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SEMO Alum Joey Lucchesi is Living His Baseball Dream

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Article submitted by Ann Hayes, University Communications Director, Office of the President

Left-handed pitcher *Joey Lucchesi* is living his baseball dream just two years removed from a dominant career at Southeast Missouri.

Lucchesi became the first SEMO baseball alum to start a Major League Baseball (MLB) game on the mound when he was called up to pitch against the Milwaukee Brewers on March 30.

After sporting a 1.54 ERA in four spring starts, the 24-year old Lucchesi was informed he would be making his big league debut only two days into the MLB season.

Taking the mound for the first time as a member of the San Diego Padres, Lucchesi allowed seven hits, three earned runs, walked none and struck out one in 4.2 innings.

Lucchesi recorded his first career MLB strikeout against Ryan Braun in the top of the third inning. He threw three-straight sinkers reaching 90-91 mph to retire Braun in the at-bat. Braun finished with five RBI in that game.

The call to The Show came quicker than expected for Lucchesi when the decision was made to start him in place of Dinelson Lamet. Lamet strained his right elbow in the Padres' final game of spring training and could be out for a month.

“Joey made the decision a lot easier just by his performance over the last month, general manager A.J. Preller said in an article by the Associated Press. “He throws strikes with three pitches and he did that all last year in the minor leagues and did that in spring training. I think he’s earned the right to be in the rotation from the beginning of the year.”

Lucchesi is now 1-0 with a 1.72 ERA and 16 strikeouts in 15.2 innings through three starts this season. He picked up his first MLB win when he recorded eight strikeouts in six innings against the Colorado Rockies on Apr. 10.

“I went out there in the first inning and felt great. I made one bad pitch and recuperated, and was able to get the job done,” said Lucchesi after his first MLB victory.

A native of Newark, California, Lucchesi was selected by the Padres in the fourth round of the 2016 Major League Baseball Draft following two outstanding seasons at SEMO.

A two-time Ohio Valley Conference Pitcher of the Year and First-Team All-OVC pick, Lucchesi broke the school’s single-season strikeout record with 149 Ks in 2016. He finished his two-year SEMO tenure with a 17-7 record, 2.62 ERA and career-record 242 strikeouts in 199 innings over 32 appearances and 28 starts.

Once he left Cape Girardeau, Lucchesi began his professional career as a member of the Tri-City Dust Devils, where he pitched his way into a starting role with the short-season Class A club in 2016. He posted a 1.35 ERA and 53 strikeouts in 40 innings for Tri-City, and was named a Short-Season All-Star.

After that, Lucchesi pitched 139 innings split between the high-A Lake Elsinore Storm and AA San Antonio Missions a year ago. He registered a 2.20 ERA with 148 strikeouts en route to claiming MiLB.com Organization All-Star honors.

Lucchesi, the No. 9 prospect in San Diego’s organization, according to MLB.com, was supposed to begin this season with the AAA El Paso Chihuahuas.

“We’re excited about him (Lucchesi),” manager Andy Green said before the Padres season-opener in an article by the San Diego Union-Tribune. “We have a ton of confidence in him. We have tons of confidence in him being part of the rotation and being part of the rotation for a long time.”

Lucchesi is slated to make his next start against the San Francisco Giants on Apr. 15. First pitch is set for 3:10 p.m., CT, at Petco Park.

Lucchesi’s Professional Baseball Honors

2017 MiLB.com Organization All-Star (San Diego)

2017 California League Mid-Season All-Star (Lake Elsinore Storm)
2017 California League Pitcher of the Week, Apr. 30 (Lake Elsinore Storm)
2016 Baseball America Short-Season All-Star (Tri-City Dust Devils)
2016 Northwest League Post-Season All-Star (Tri-City Dust Devils)

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