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RAMSEUR - There are two distinct philosophies when it comes to being a leadoff hitter. One is to be patient and allow the hitters behind him to see as many different pitches as the pitcher can throw.

Liberty Post 81's Tyler Westbrook takes the opposite approach.

"My Travel Ball coach last year looked at the stats for the first couple of games played and noticed I am hitting better on first-pitch or second-pitch counts," said Westbrook, who played for the Southern Baseball Academy out of Hillsborough in prior summers before joining Post 81. "I was hitting better early in the count compared to getting behind. I adapted to that and that is definitely me now. First pitch."

Westbrook, who played at Eastern Alamance and is on his way to Lenoir Community College to play baseball in the fall, has been a breath of fresh air for Liberty. The 6-foot-0, 175-pound outfielder has been a catalyst for the Liberty offense while also providing a solid presence in center field.

"His high school coach reached out to me and said we have this kid who is going to play at the next level and he's looking for a place to play this summer," said Liberty Post 81 coach Nate Cockman. "He said he's a great kid, super respectful and he'll run through a brick wall for you. I had never seen him play, but those are all things you want to hear. Him being a very good player is icing on the cake."

Westbrook made an early impression on his new team. After helping Liberty rally from a 9-0 deficit and a 9-2 deficit in the seventh inning to tie and eventually defeat Mocksville-Davie in extra innings in the season opener, he took the first pitch from Rowan County in his first home game and deposited it over the left field fence as Liberty would go on to record a 7-5 win over Rowan County, which is now 19-2.

"A lot of coaches want their leadoff to see pitches, be patient," Cockman said. "He is the opposite. Him being so aggressive is good to see."





Tyler Westbrook.

Westbrook is coming off his best two seasons at Eastern Alamance. As a junior, he hit .325 with 24 runs scored, five doubles and a home run. He also stole seven bases. His senior season, he hit .300 with 21 runs scored and four doubles.

This summer, he's hitting .393 with three doubles, one home run, 12 runs scored and he's walked four times. His on-base percentage is at .564 and he's committed just one error all season, a .960 fielding percentage.

"My mindset when I get in the box is to do anything you can to get on base," Westbrook said. "Walk, hit by pitch, anything to get on."

Westbrook has not only delivered offensively for Post 81, but he's been a steady center fielder, covering the middle of the field as well as both allies.

"I figured he would be okay at the plate, but he's been eye-opening to see him maneuver in the outfield," Cockman said. "There are countless games in which he has saved runs. He also has huge leadership abilities."

Westbrook said he played third in the two varsity games he played as a freshman at EAHS, but then switched to the outfield.

"I've always been an outfielder since middle school and I love it," Westbrook said. "I feel like getting a good jump, reading the ball well (are keys to being successful). I like to play the middle on most righties. A lot of our outfielders know the guys on the other team better and if I line up right, I feel I can make most of the plays."

Cockman said Westbrook has provided way more than just solid play on the field for Post 81, which is 2-6 in Northern Division play and 4-9 overall.

"He's been a great leader, a vocal leader," Cockman said. "He's in that senior leader role and he'll do anything that is needed. He really gets along well with them and they enjoy having him on the team."

That they do.