

July 5, 2025

By Dennis Garcia
SportsTone.net

RAMSEUR - There's nothing like friends helping out friends.

After Eli Holland finished his first year at Lenoir Community College, the Southern Alamance High School graduate was looking for a place to play baseball this summer.

Some high school friends, including Mark King, told him Liberty Post 81 was looking for some players and Holland thought playing American Legion baseball might be a good fit.

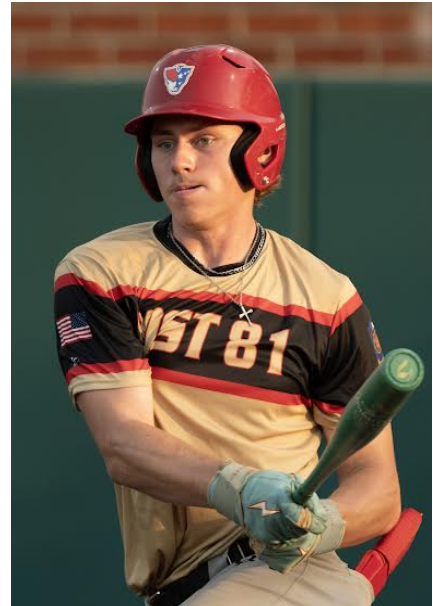
It certainly has been.

Holland is a key reason why Liberty Post 81 finished tied for second in the Area III North Division II standings with a 7-3 conference record. He was also instrumental in helping turn the season around as Liberty dropped its first eight games and nine of its first 10. But once the conference season began, Post 81 was ready as it won its first seven league games in securing a postseason berth.

Third-seeded Liberty will take a 7-12 overall record into the first round of the Area III playoffs against second-seeded Hamlet. That series begins Saturday in Hamlet with Game 2 set for Grady Lawson Field at Eastern Randolph High School on Sunday. Game 3 would be back in Hamlet on Monday.

Holland has played 16 games this summer, the second most of any player on the Liberty team. Not only has he been available, but his contributions have been invaluable. Hitting .310 with four doubles and a home run while saving numerous runs with his athletic play behind the plate.

"Coach (Jason) Smith from Southern Alamance sent us a few players and Mark King reached out and said he knew a catcher who was looking for a place to play," said Liberty coach Nathan Cockman. "He called me one day and said he was looking forward to meeting us and playing this summer. I'm glad he did. He's an awesome kid who works really hard and there is a level of maturity you don't get from a lot of kids.



*Photo by Eric Abernethy /
Randolph Hub.*

When you get to college, there has to be a difference from those who are playing high school and there is."

Holland hit .235 in 17 games at Lenoir Community College this past season, his first after guiding Southern Alamance to a 44-29 record his three years on varsity. The Patriots were 27-9 in league play those three years.

"He helps our pitchers control the running game," Cockman said. "He's like 1.9 (seconds) or 2.0 to the plate. When you have a guy back there who is super athletic, there's a big difference. He's one of the top well-rounded catchers I have ever coached."

That was never more apparent than Liberty's league game against Chatham County on June 21. While Chatham County built a 7-0 lead after six innings, the margin could have been much larger, but Holland made defensive save after defensive save behind the plate. That proved vital as Post 81 miraculously rallied to tie the game in the seventh with a seven-run outburst and then scored three times in the eighth for a 10-8 win.

"You have to see (the pitch) early and it's basically reaction after that," said Holland, a 6-foot-1, 210-pounder. "I take a lot of pride in that because that is something I can control. It feels good to block it."

If Liberty is to advance past Hamlet, a team they split with during the regular season, Holland will certainly be a key.

"We have to be on the same page and play together," Holland said.

You can bet Holland will do his part.