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LIBERTY - There were so many questions when Liberty Post 81 started the American Legion baseball season, most notably how the community would react after the program returned after a one-year hiatus.

And although the final record may not reflect the work put in by the coaching staff, the personnel at the Post, the players and certainly the community, head coach Nathan Cockman has the program trending in the right direction.

After a blistering start saw Liberty jump out to wins in nine of its first 12 games, the competition level and like so many other Legion teams experienced this summer - the numbers game - finally caught up with the team.

"Some of the biggest things were things we knew were coming," Cockman said of a season that ended with nine straight losses for a final record of 9-12. "The amount of players we were going to have each game and not knowing who was going to be there every game. That is something I found was more troubling this year than in the past."

Coming off a missed year and changing its name from Eastern Randolph Post 81 to Liberty Post 81 to recognize where the sponsor is located, Post 81 started the year 9-3, including a Area III Northern Division-opening win over Davidson County, which is currently fighting for the Area III championship along with High Point..

"One of the biggest struggles we had is that we were very young and early in the season we were playing teams that were the same," Cockman said. "We started facing older and bigger ball players and it was kind of a culture shock for them. Some of the pitchers we were facing, it just caught up with us. They saw a level of baseball they weren't used to seeing, but it's going to make them better players in the spring."

Cockman said there was a lot to be proud of this summer.

"We continued to fight, there was never a night when we just rolled over," Cockman said. "Overall, we did a good job of hitting even though we were young. But what we



hung our hat on the most was our defense. We had young pitchers and we were able to tell them to just fill up the zone and let the defense work."

Blessed with solid community support and an increase in sponsors, Cockman said he is looking forward to what the future holds.

"We gained a countless amount of new sponsors and our attendance at home games was up from two years ago," Cockman said. "These guys will be another year older and some of them have already reached out to me about next summer. It's going to be important next year we make sure everyone is on the same page and figure out how we can make Legion a priority instead of just being on the back burner."

Cockman and assistant coaches Jordan Cassell and Logan Beasley are certainly on the right road.