

By Tristan Hobbes

Billen Good

A firm handshake from pitching coach Mark Michaud in front of the dugout at the end of the sixth signaled that Tyler Billen's night was over. Prior to that, the big left-hander gave the Sweets all he had in his first outing of the summer.

"It was a lot better than I was expecting," Billen said. "I wasn't even expecting to go through six innings."

Billen did more than that. After giving up a run in the first inning, he settled down to allow just four hits over his six innings of work. This was after making only four appearances and throwing just 3.2 innings this spring at Harding University. That was after a freshman season in which he was named to the All-Conference first team.

The lefty has decided to transfer for the fall semester and just received his acceptance at Southwest Oklahoma St. yesterday. That must have made the six innings of one-run ball feel even better.

"The win goes to everyone on the team," Billen said. "I can't take full credit for it."

Kopacz, Warriors playing key role

Chance Kopacz led the NWAACC in doubles and RBI but unlike many of his fellow competitors, still did not have a team to play for in the summer in mid-May. In need of a player that can swing the bat and play several positions in the field, the Sweets signed Kopacz and the impact of that decision has been seen so far.



The Sweets starting right fielder, Kopacz (pictured right) has provided an offensive punch to the lineup. He collected two hits and drove in a run on Opening Night, broke up Max Beatty's perfect game on Saturday and had two

more hits and an RBI on Tuesday. Wednesday, his single in the first inning tied the game at 1-1 and took away any momentum the Portland Toros had gained in the top half of the frame.

"I want to improve and keep on getting better," Kopacz said about his goals for this summer.

"My biggest goal is to get better defensively."

He was tested more frequently tonight, making several catches ranging towards the right field line. But if he needs any tips, he just needs to look to his right at center fielder Alex Bonczyk.

Teammates at Walla Walla CC, the two have combined to help the Sweets get off to a strong start. Only a ten-day player, Bonczyk has made his time count. The speedy outfielder made a sliding catch on Opening Night and then turned a sliding catch into a double play against the Toros tonight.

Brett Watson and Michael Leach are also members of the Sweets and the four players have all contributed in their own way. Watson pitched six innings in a losing effort on Saturday and in his first start at catcher, Leach doubled and walked twice.