

# Little Giants win district crown

By BOB MARKER  
Sports Editor

ASHLAND — The cake is baked and Ross is putting the icing on it.

"Last night (Thursday) was the end of the nerves," Ross coach Cheryl Coressel said after her team defeated Vermilion 3-2 in the Division I district softball tournament finals Friday at Brookside Park.

Thursday, Ross defeated Oregon Clay to officially clinch the Great Lakes League championship.

"Clinching that league title, we had to do," Coressel said. "This, like one of my kids said, is icing on the cake."

"Tournaments, you are supposed to sit back and enjoy. Win 'em, you know, but sit back and enjoy them. Compared to last night, the kids were relaxed. A lot of pressure has stopped for us... we are just out to play good ball."

Winning pitcher Jessica Rollins tossed a three-hitter, fanning seven and walking two.

"My shoulder has been sore all week," Rollins said, "but when I know I have to throw really good, I don't worry about my shoulder. I totally block it out."

Coressel said: "The more Jessica throws, the better she gets. She was overpowering today."

## What's next

Ross, winner of 21 straight games and 22 of 25 overall, will play Toledo Notre Dame at 4:30 p.m. Thursday in the Division I Regional Softball Tournament at Brookside Park in Ashland.

## Wildcats also win, B3

Rollins was making her fifth straight start.

"We have faced as good of pitching," Vermilion coach Shelby Steele said, "but some days you hit and some days you don't. We did not get the bats going soon enough and when we did, we tried to take advantage and be aggressive but it just did not work out today."

Defensively, Ross played errorless ball and gunned down a pair of Vermilion runners on plays.

"We had to play good defense," Coressel said, "and we actually did that for once. I knew we would be in the ball game if we hit 'em and played a good round of defense."

"Casey (Shepelin) set the tone in the beginning of the game by making a few good plays at second and Dawn (Zerman) set the tone at bat by making contact right away and let the whole team know they can do it."

Zerman singled leading off the bottom of the first and scored on Belinda Sandoval's one-out single.

Ross left the bases loaded in the first, second and fifth innings and stranded 11 total runners.

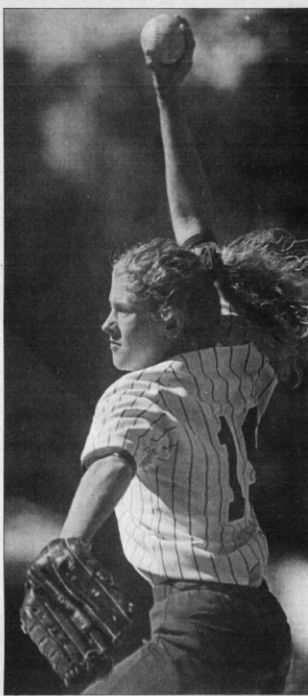
Vermilion threatened in the third but Amy Cico was out at the plate while trying to score on Tammy Blake's double to right. Rightfielder Jamie Hinkle threw to Zerman who relayed to catcher Natalie Robbins to get Cico.

Ross scored twice in the fifth after Holly Pelfrey led off with a single. A fielder's choice, Tricia Busdeker's single and a fielder's choice on Robbins' bunt — Vermilion third baseman Kristi Middleton did not make a throw while holding Pelfrey — loaded the bases.

Rollins singled to center for one run and Shepelin's single to right scored the other.

Vermilion cut the Ross lead to one in the sixth on Blake's two-run single to right. Hinkle's relay to Busdeker to Robbins did not get the sliding Cico at the plate but Robbins threw to Zerman to get Blake at second for the first out.

Rollins retired the next two batters and set the Sailors down on two fly balls and a pop up in the seventh — adding another layer of frosting.



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

JESSICA ROLLINS of Ross delivers pitch in the final inning.

## Lakota heads for regionals

### ■ Comeback: Lakota wiped out a 5-1 Lima Central lead.

By TIM HARMON  
Staff writer

LIMA — Lakota averaged nine runs in two tournament games to defeat Friday's Division III District Baseball Tournament championship game.

The Raiders needed that many in their 9-7 victory over Lima Central Catholic at Bath High School, which gave Lakota its first ever regional berth.

Trailing 7-1 after three innings, Lakota (16-5) scored five runs in the top of the fourth on Jon Graber's two-run double, Chad Miller's run-scoring single and a two-run single by Gabe Casdell.

"We have been a team that has put big innings together," Lakota coach Paul Gnepper said. "I felt confident that we could do that as long as we could hold them make."

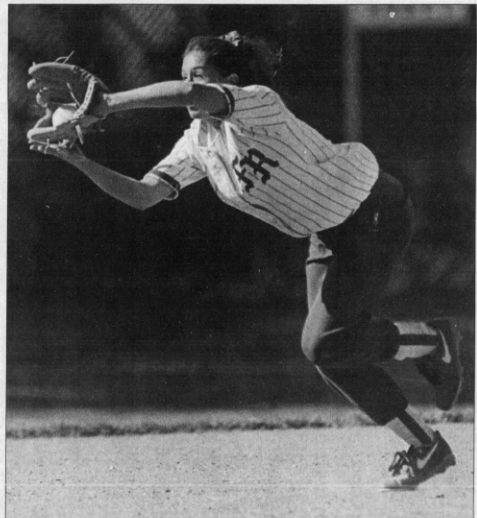
## What's next

Lakota will play Ontario in the Division III Regional Baseball Tournament at Lima Bath High School. The game is at 4:30 p.m. Friday following a semifinal game between Genoa and Lorain Catholic. Ontario (17-8) beat New London 16-7 in a district final Friday at North Robinson.

After Gnepper struck out and Graber was forced at second on Miller's grounder to short, Plouck scored the lead run when Miller got caught in a rundown between first and second.

Gnepper threw just 32 pitches in the final three innings after laboring with 87 through the first four.

"The last three or four innings, we went more to the fastball and didn't throw quite as many curveballs," coach Gnepper said. "It looked like they were having trouble more with the fastball,



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

ROSS SHORTSTOP Dawn Zerman grabs a soft liner off the bat of Molly O'Leary in the 5th inning.

## PREP SOFTBALL

# Ross advances to district final

News-Messenger reports

ASHLAND — Fremont Ross will head back here Friday for the Division I district softball tournament championship game after coming from behind to defeat Mansfield Madison 7-6 Wednesday in a semifinal game.

The Little Giants, 20-3 after their 19th straight win, face Vermilion at 4:30 p.m. at Brookside Park. The Sailors, 15-1, defeated Ashland 3-2 in the other semifinal Tuesday.

"We know now we can play against good teams," Ross coach Cheryl Coressel said. "We know these games are going to be one- and two-run games. We have to learn how to deal with it."

Madison, 20-7, jumped to a 4-0 lead after one inning. The Rams had two bunt hits and reached on an error following another bunt in the inning.

"They bunted to create some things, and my corners were slow to get to the ball," Coressel said. "The kids were nervous and it showed."

"We finally got a lead runner

## Today

The Little Giants meet Oregon Clay at 4:30 p.m. at Roodger Young Park with a chance to clinch an outright Great Lakes League championship.

on a bunt (in the second inning), and I think that discouraged them from bunting."

Ross, which had 11 hits and benefitted from nine Madison errors but left 15 runners on base, trailed 6-5 entering the seventh.

The Little Giants scored the tying run when Donna Steinberger reached on an error with one out, moved to second on a wild pitch and scored on a single by Holly Pelfrey.

Tricia Busdeker singled Pelfrey to third, and Natalie Robbins singled to left field one out later for the winning run.

"The kids connected at the right times," Coressel said. "We dig ourselves out, and we know

that's not going to happen against teams that don't make mistakes."

Jessica Rollins, who walked three and struck out five, set the side down in order in the bottom of the seventh.

Pelfrey, Belinda Sandoval and Busdeker each had two hits for Ross. Pelfrey drove in three runs and scored three times.

Ross scored three runs in the third after Dawn Zerman and Steinberger opened the inning with singles. Pelfrey hit a two-run triple, and Sandoval had an RBI single one out later.

After the Rams upped their lead to 6-3 with two runs in the bottom of the third, Ross scored two in the fourth.

Beth Sanford led off with a single but was forced at second on Zerman's fielder's choice. Zerman went to second on a fielder's choice, and Pelfrey reached on an error to give Ross runners at first and third.

Busdeker drove in a run with a single, and Pelfrey scored on an error.

## Woodmore wins SLL championship

News-Messenger reports

WOODVILLE — Woodmore won its second straight Suburban Lakes League softball championship with a 7-3 victory over Elmwood Wednesday.

The Wildcats are 20-3 and undefeated in nine Suburban Lakes League games.

Elmwood, 18-4, slipped to 8-2 in the league.

"The teams will meet again, at 4:30 p.m. Friday, in the Division III district tournament championship game."

Losing pitcher Niki Combs gave Elmwood a 2-0 lead in the first inning Wednesday with a two-run homer.

"She smoked that one out of the park," Woodmore coach Mike Lee said of Combs' shot

that cleared the 200-foot fence. "It's the hardest hit I have seen off (Angie) Fegley in two years."

Fegley settled down to scatter six hits and strike out nine.

Woodmore tied it in the second on Carl Robertsen's single. Rupa Narra's double and Fegley's single.

In the third on back-to-back singles by Kate Hinrichs and Kelli Harman and run-scoring bunts by Maria Finnemore and Laurie Crispen.

Narra, who drove in two runs, had three hits, and Fegley, Michelle Baker, Hinrichs and Harman had two hits apiece.