

Sandusky inside-the-park home run stings Smith, Little Giants

By TIM HARMON

Staff writer

PLYMOUTH — Sandusky catcher Eric Irby's bat, silent for most of two games against Fremont Ross this season, awoke with a boom Saturday.

Irby provided momentum for the Blue Streaks to defeat the Little Giants 3-2 in a Division I sectional tournament game with one swing and sent Sandusky into the sectional title game against Ashland.

Irby's inside-the-park home run in the bottom of the seventh broke up Aaron Smith no-hitter and forced an extra inning.

"Eric is that kind of player," Sandusky coach Bil Deming said. "Everybody

strikes out (four times in two games against Ross, including once Saturday) once in awhile, but he's had some big hits for us."

With Ross leading 2-0 and Smith cruising, the Sandusky seventh started with a lead-off walk to winning pitcher Todd Kaufman.

After Scott Root made a diving catch in center field to keep the no-hitter going, Smith left a fastball out over the plate and Irby launched it to center. Root went back, dove and smashed into the fence. Shaken from the collision, Root lay prone as the ball settled and Irby raced around second.

Irby slipped and fell between second and

third. By the time Root made his relay throw to the infield, he was headed home.

The Blue Streaks, 5-6, scored the game-winner in the seventh. Christian Walton doubled leading off, moved to third on a bunt base hit and scored on Demar Moore's grounder to second.

"Aaron had an outstanding day on the hill," Ross coach Dan Fought said. "We make that catch at the fence and it's over. Scott made a great effort, but Aaron's attitude on the mound changed after that."

Ross, 8-6, was victim of its inability to score runs consistently.

"We just do not get hits," Fought said. "You're asking a lot of a pitcher to hold a

team to no runs or one run."

The Little Giants had four hits, but three of them came in the first inning when they scored two unearned runs.

"I would rather they be big hits," Fought said. "I'm not turning down any hits, but we don't do enough with the bat."

Kaufman matched Smith pitch for pitch after the first.

"We've had some problems keeping people off base — walking people," Deming said. "Todd was around the plate."

"We ask our pitchers to keep us in the game; sometimes producing runs is harder than you think."

Ross knows that.