

Ross outfield makes play when it counts

By Kevin Shields
Sports writer

FREMONT — Fly balls have been an adventure at times for Ross' new outfield this spring.

But even through all the trials and tribulations, each outfielder has found ways to make big plays. And McKenna Pettiford's catch in left field was a key play for the Little Giants on Tuesday.

With two outs and Marion Harding threatening with run-

ners at third and second base, Pettiford ran down a ball off the bat of Presidents' hitter Paige Kightlinger that looked to be a sure gap shot that would've tied the game. Instead, Pettiford squeezed it and Ross had a 5-3 victory and a sectional crown in a Division I contest played at Alumni Fields.

The Little Giants will play the winner of Thursday's game between Bowling Green and Perrysburg next Tuesday at 5 p.m. at Tiffin University.

"They made a big play," said Ross coach Mike Gilbert, of his outfield. "Just like the play before that when Brina (Hrynciw) made an effort at a ball in center field and dropped it, McKenna was there to back the play up and keep (the Presidents) to one base. That's something we haven't been doing. I saw improvement."

Harding (11-16) scored three runs in the top half of the fifth inning to cut into what had been a 5-0 advantage for the Little Gi-

ants (15-11), aided by scoring four unearned runs in the second inning.

"After we got our runs we started relaxing and that's where coach (Gilbert) said, 'we're not done yet. It's not time to relax yet, it's time to push harder,'" Ross catcher Kiera Hall said. "Feels good to win. This was probably one of the better games we played together as a team. Everyone showed up to play and we reduced our errors a lot, even though we had

a few pop up again."

Five to be exact. Two occurred in the fifth inning where the Presidents runs went unearned. After Hailey Crochet led off with a double to right field, Kaitlynn Evans reached on an error that allowed Crochet to come home. Harding added two more runs when Kightlinger hit a two RBI single through the left side. But Ross pitcher McKenzie Gallagher

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recovered to strike out the final hitter before any more damage could be done.

Gallagher finished with 10 strikeouts as she held the Presidents to three hits. She had one walk and hit another batter.

"I thought McKenzie pitched a really good game and we played good enough defense to win," Gilbert said. "When you get to this point of the year anything can happen."

Gallagher didn't surrender a hit until a bunt single in the fourth inning. She stranded three runners in that inning, getting out a one out bases loaded jam.

"She can get rattled, but she calms me down and I calm her down when things aren't going our way," said Hall, of her bat-

tery mate.

Ross grabbed the lead in the home half of the first inning when Meghan Michael's sacrifice fly in four territory on the first base line scored Gallagher, who tagged up and caught the Presidents out of position.

Lindsay Overmyer and Hrynciw tallied back to back singles to start the second inning for the Little Giants. Overmyer scored on a throwing error by Harding pitcher Taylor Hancock.

Hrynciw scored on another error at third base on a fielder's choice by Gallagher, before Hall singled in Gallagher and Bailey Eishen with a single to right.

Hall and Overmyer were the lone Ross hitters with multiple hits, each finishing 2-for-3.

"I'm seeing the ball better and I'm way more disciplined at the plate than I was last year," Hall said. "I've been practicing

on my swing a lot and it's been paying off lately."

Tuesday's game marked the final home game for Gilbert, who will retire from coaching after having coached the Ross softball program the last 15 years. The West Carrollton native has taught in Fremont City Schools the past 38 years and has also helped coach varsity football and basketball.

"He's such a good person," said Hall, of her coach. "I want to make this season go far from him."

Said Gilbert, "It's been a lot of fun. I've had a great career with great kids. What more can you ask for? Whether or not they play the best ball sometimes, these girls come out and practice hard and they try to do what you tell them. In this day and age, that's pretty special."

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