

Ross wins sectional title

Little Giants advance to district play

By BOB MARKER
Staff writer

OREGON — An early hit turned on Fremont Ross and turned off Clay Thursday as the Little Giants defeated the Eagles 9-4 to win a Division I sectional softball tournament title.

The Little Giants, 11-2, will play Sylvania Northview in the Perrysburg district tournament May 19 at 4:30 p.m. Northview defeated Whitmer 7-2 Wednesday night in a sectional final at Perrysburg.

"The base hit by Donna (Steinberger) showed us we could hit," Ross coach Cheryl Coressel said. "It became contagious after that."

Steinberger's hit drove in a run in the Ross second.

Still, the Ross bats did not completely come alive until the fifth with Clay clinging to a 3-2 lead.

Dawn Zerman's infield single started the Ross rally, which ended after eight batters went to the plate. Four hits with a pair walks in the inning gave Ross a 7-3 lead.

Holly Pelfrey followed Zerman's hit with a single to left and Belinda Sandoval's single to right knotted the game at 3-3 and knocked out Clay's starting pitcher Jenny Brown.

Sherry Brown took over for the Eagles but walked Tricia Busdeker and Jessica Rollins to force in the go-ahead run. Natalie Robbins popped out to short, but Sandoval tagged up and slid home with the third Ross run.

"We became aggressive on the base paths," Coressel said. "I think that got them down and we got up."

Andi Oprei capped the rally with a two-out, two-run single.

The Eagles scored a run on a hit, walk and an error in the top of the first but Ross tied it in the bottom of the inning with an un-



News-Messenger/Jeremy Wadsworth

FREMONT ROSS PITCHER Kim Crawford fires one to the plate Thursday during the Little Giants' 9-4 sectional championship victory over Oregon Clay. The win advanced Ross to district play.

earned run on two walks and an Eagle error.

Run-scoring singles by Robin Rothenbuhler and Nicki Mohler put Clay ahead 3-1 in the top of the second before Ross pitcher Kim Crawford settled down.

"I was nervous at first," said Crawford, the Little Giants' lone senior.

Crawford, 8-2, was also having difficulty navigating the pitching area at Oregon Community Park.

"It was like pitching off a mound," she said.

Crawford was high with her pitches in the first three innings before getting used to the layout.

"Then I started pitching low," Crawford said, "because that was where he (umpire) was calling the strikes."

Crawford allowed 10 hits but a pair of double plays helped her avoid much damage.

Ross used a double play to cut a Clay rally in the sixth. The Eagles had three hits to go with a Ross error but managed only a run.

After Mandy Crain was safe on

an error by Oprei at second, she went to second on a passed ball. Rothenbuhler grounded to Zerman at short who threw to Busdeker for the out at first. Busdeker threw to Sandoval at third to catch Crain.

Crawford allow three straight singles after that for a run but fanned Cindi Menden to get out of the inning.

Clay got a hit in the top of the seventh but a strikeout and a hard groundout to Oprei killed the Eagles' chances.