

2014 Season Review

BASEBALL



Fremont Ross' Tanner Albert, 18, bumps fists with Michael Egbert after making a catch for an out to finish the inning during a baseball game against Perrysburg on May 16. JONATHAN BIRD/NEWS-MESSENGER

Experienced catcher will carry Ross team

By Kevin Shields
Sports writer

FREMONT — Danger signs should be installed inside of the visitors' dugout at Fremont Ross' Alumni Fields. And they should warn opposing base runners they run at their own risk.

Runners who tried to swipe a bag on Little Giants' catcher Kole Amor in 2013 didn't have such warning, and more than often, paid dearly for it. Of the 61 runners who tried to gain an extra base on Ross' Most Outstanding Defensive Player, 30 were caught stealing, gunned down by the big 5-foot-11 backstop, who doubles as a defensive end in the fall for the Little Giants of the gridiron.

And don't be surprised if you see him pitching an inning or two.

"There is no doubt Kole is a great catcher," Little Giants coach Mark King said. "It's rare in the high school game that we see a catcher throw out 50 percent of those who run on them. He's a tough kid, a great learner and he's

FREMONT ROSS BASEBALL

Coach: Mark King, seventh year.

2013 Finish: 15-14 (4-6 TRAC/finished fourth at tournament).

Returns: Senior Kole Amor, catcher; Bryce Dukeshire, infielder; Elijah Hampton, shortstop/pitcher; Knick Lippert (outfielder) and Andy Mapus (pitcher/infielder); juniors Tanner Albert (outfielder/pitcher), Michael Hufford (outfielder/infielder), Stefan Johnson (outfielder/pitcher), Nick Michael (infielder) and Jalen Slick (outfielder/pitcher).

Newcomers: Juniors Travis Brown (infielder/pitcher), Dominic Cominsky (pitcher/infielder), Eliseo Contreras (catcher), Derek Fuller (infielder/pitcher), Dirk Gross (pitcher/outfielder) and Bryce Moreno (outfielder).

Graduates: Tyler Wolf, Michael Egbert, Brandon Weiker, Cole Bowers, Spencer Conklin and Ty Wilson.

Outlook: The Little Giants lost key players in Wolf, Egbert and Weiker who led the team in all three major aspects of the game (offense, defense and pitching). Ross, which made it to the Final Four of the TRAC baseball tournament each of the league's first two seasons, will rely heavily on nine returning letter winners who all saw action a year ago as underclassmen. The Little Giants are sure to be underdogs in the TRAC again, but the role has worked well for them in second and fourth place league finishes, respectively, the past two years.

worked a lot with his footwork. Right now, his pop time (the time taken from the instant a pitch hits a catcher's glove to the moment it strikes the glove of the middle infielder at second base) is right at a flat two seconds, which is a good time

for a college catcher."

Amor will be one of nine letter winners back for Ross. He'll be the leader of a group that, unlike in the past, will be

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Fremont Ross' Jalen Slick tosses the ball to Tyler Wolf for an out at first during a baseball game against Clay High School at Fifth Third Field in Toledo on April 23.

JONATHAN BIRD/NEWS-MESSENGER

Baseball

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more reliant on its defense.

"We've been focusing more on upgrading our defensive performance thus far," said King, whose team went 15-14 last season and advanced to the Final Four of the Three Rivers Athletic Conference tournament for the second straight year, despite a 4-6 mark in league play. "We like where we are as a team. Offensively, we'll be returning to a more well-rounded, base-hitting offensive approach after finding great success with the power game last season."

Not all the muscle is gone, however.

Amor, who will hit in the three-hole for the Little Giants, hit at a .363 clip as a junior, driving in 27 runs and collecting five extra base hits. Numbers could easily climb with his bat speed and a little development.

"We've been gifted when it comes to catchers over the last 12 years," King said. "We've had six consecutive catchers here who have earned either all-league, all-district or all-state honors. My coaches Roger Hetrick and Jared King have been instrumental in the development of our catchers."

Amor's baseball IQ also has grown to the point where his coach is now comfortable with him calling his own game.

"Going into this year, he'll call more of his own game for us," King said. "He didn't do that for us in the past."

Michael Hufford, a junior outfielder, hit .240 a year ago. Jalen Slick, another junior who will be looked upon to fill a number of big roles, struggled with consistency, but drove in 11 runs.

Elijah Hampton, a senior infielder and pitcher, drove in eight runs and scored 14, while Tanner Albert, a junior outfielder and pitcher, hit .500 in 69 innings played.

Bryce Moreno and Nick Michael are two juniors who lettered in limited action as sophomores. Both have plenty

of potential. Moreno was the JV player of the year for the Little Giants in 2013. Michael played designated hitter for the varsity squad towards the end of the season.

Ross hit .300 as a group in 2013.

"I think we're more of a line-drive hitting baseball club this year," King said. "As a group, we were in double digits in home runs last year and I still think we can hit the baseball well, but we'll be doing more situational hitting."

King didn't like the all-or-nothing approach his hitters took on too many occasions last year.

"We relied on guys to hit the ball to the wall a little too much with runners on and less than two outs," he said. "We won't be able to keep that same approach if we want to get runners in."

Pitching will be Ross' biggest question mark coming into 2014.

"I'm happy with the numbers we have, but Andy Mapus is about the only shut down guy we have at the moment," King said. "Behind Andy, we'll need guys to hit their spots and for us to play good defense behind them."

Mapus was 4-3 a year ago with a 4.47 earned run average and 46 strikeouts in over 43 innings of duty. He issued only 20 walks.

"Andy is a big powerful young man capable of throwing in the mid-80s with a nice breaking pitch," King said. "His next step to continue to learn the mental approach to pitching. But he battled through a broken bone in his ankle last year. We're looking for good things out of him."

Albert is projected as the Little Giants' No. 2 starter, with Slick and Hampton in tow.

"We have high hopes and every intention to contend in our highly competitive conference," King said. "With a strong team chemistry and a very strong work ethic, we look forward to the weather clearing and the start of the season."

KShields@gannett.com
419-334-1043

Twitter: @KShieldsNM

ROUNDUP

Baseball: Clyde 6, Fremont Ross 1

Seth Magers allowed two hits and one run while striking out five and walking four in 4 1/3 innings pitched in the first game of the season as Clyde defeated Fremont Ross 6-1 in a non-conference matchup.

Jacob Robinett allowed no hits while striking out three to finish the game.

Konner Garcia had three hits, including two doubles, Derek Gray drove in two runs and Timmy Hoppe had two hits for the Fliers. Drake Camarata scored twice while Brett Combs stole three bases and scored a run.

“I was really pleased with how the kids played,” first-year Clyde coach George Parks said. “They handled the conditions extremely well. I can’t say enough about Seth Magers and Jacob Robinett on their performances on the mound.

“Anytime you can get that first win out of the way early it’s always a positive.”

BASEBALL

Albert still maturing, notches win for Ross



Port Clinton's Max Avis loses the ball as he collides with Fremont Ross' baserunner Elijah Hampton during a game Monday. JONATHON BIRD/NEWS-MESSENGER PHOTOS

Little Giants defeat Port Clinton 12-2 in five innings

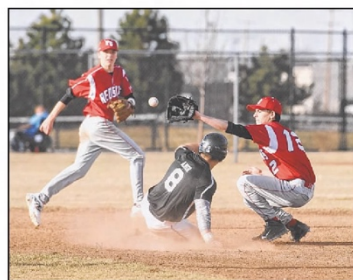
By Matthew Horn
Sports writer

Tanner Albert of Fremont Ross reached base and scored in three consecutive innings against three different pitchers Monday, and notched the win on the mound as the Little Giants defeated Port Clinton 12-2 in five innings in a non-conference matchup.

"My curveball wasn't really on so I tried to pound the fastball," Albert said. "They were behind a little and I tried to mix it high and low. I'm working on not getting down on myself. It's all about maturity. This is my first season with a pitching role on varsity. I have to stay composed, mix in the curve and get the rust off."

Albert struck out six, walked three and hit a batter while allowing two hits and two runs in four innings.

"Tanner had great command of the fastball," Ross coach Mark King said. "He



Fremont Ross' Kole Amor is safe at second ahead of the tag of Port Clinton's Trevor Frias during a baseball game Monday.

put himself in a few bad spots of his own accord. We'll have to throw strikes and defense is one of our strongest suits. (Albert's) worked on his mental approach. He's got a live arm and he's worked on his

mechanics.

"He was under control for the most part in his second varsity start (on the hill). We looked sharp (on defense). Right now, I'm happiest with the pitching staff."

Jalen Slick tossed the final inning Monday for Ross.

Albert already trusts his defense. The Little Giants committed one error Monday.

"I feel totally comfortable with the defense behind me," Albert said. "I'm going to give up hits but when I do I feel comfortable with everybody on defense. That takes pressure off me. I have a good defense behind me."

Slick drove in one run, Bryce Moreno doubled twice, drove in a run and scored once, and Kole Amor scored two runs for Ross (1-1). Mike Huffard scored one run, Andy Mapus scored two and Elijah Hampton scored twice and drove in two.

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Ross

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Albert walked and scored after leading off in the third and doubled and scored after batting first in the fourth. He singled to drive in a run and later scored in the fifth.

“Leading off is not my favorite,” he said. “We face kids who can bring it in the TRAC. I’m looking for the first strike. I doubled on the first pitch.

Everybody throws different. I try to keep short hands through the hitting zone and pick out a pitch to hit.”

Bryce Dukeshire scored once and drove in a run.

“The weather jumped out after Saturday,” King said of a 6-1 setback to Clyde played in wintry cold. “Not in an arctic blast we were actually able to play in a spring setting. We were non-existent swinging the bats Saturday. We had

three hits and they weren’t strong.

“We had some loud outs (Monday). Generally, the hitting is behind the pitching right now. I didn’t like the approach Saturday. We made them throw some strikes and drove the ball with a better approach this time.”

The Fliers scored six unearned runs Saturday as Mapus allowed five hits.

mhorn@gannett.com

419-734-7519

Twitter: @MatthewHornNH

Baseball: Fremont Ross 15, Willard 1 (5 innings)

FREMONT — Bryce Moreno continued to swing a hot bat for the Little Giants Tuesday, going 4-for-4 with two RBIs in a non-league run-rule victory over the Crimson Flashes at Alumni Fields.

Moreno, a junior, hit .573 and had an on-base percentage of .675 as a junior varsity player in 2013.

“I skipped wrestling to practice baseball this winter, and I’ve just been having a straight swing,” Moreno said. “I’m not cocky, but I’m confident and it’s been nice to be relied on by teammates for offense.”

Catcher Kole Amor had three hits and drove in three runs for Ross (2-1), which also got a triple and four RBIs from Tanner Albert.

Dominic Cominsky earned the victory on the hill, tossing five innings, allowing a single earned run on three hits. He struck out five and walked four.

“It feels good to be out in spring weather again,” Moreno said. “We’ve been waiting for this. The last two days we’ve been pitching good and fielding it good. Once we all start to hit like this, we all get in a nice groove at the plate.”

Bryce Dukeshire added two hits and an RBI as the Little Giants tallied 15 hits as a group. Ross also got hits from Michael Hufford, Travis Brown, Jalen Slick and Knick Lippert.

Ross will play Tiffin Columbian Friday at 7 p.m. at Bowling Green’s Carter Park, before playing Oak Harbor on Saturday morning at 11 a.m. at Avon’s All Pro Freight Stadium.

Little Giants pitcher Mapus leaves Oak Harbor seeing red

By Kevin Shields
Sports writer

Ross senior captain throws three-hit shutout in win over Rockets

AVON — Fremont Ross coach Mark King had always inserted a designated hitter in place of Andy Mapus in the batting order on the days he pitched.

After Saturday, he may have to think a little harder about when to replace his senior captain's bat again.

Mapus and his defense were both outstanding in a complete-game three-hit shutout effort on the mound, while with the bat he

was the lone hitter in the game with multiple hits, going 2-for-4 with an RBI as the Little Giants routed Oak Harbor 12-0 in a non-league contest played on the FieldTurf at Avon's All Pro Freight Stadium that went six innings.

"Because of the mental approach I always wanted (Mapus) focused on pitching, so today was the first time I let him hit and he helped himself out,"

said King of Mapus who walked and struck out five Rocket hitters. "He had an all-around good game today. We're real happy with that."

Mapus, known for his natural red hair and school spirit, always leading cheers in the Ross student section at various sporting events, was eager to toe the pitching rubber against the Rockets.

Last spring, Oak Harbor out-

scored the Little Giants 26-7 in a two-game sweep at Ross' Alumni Fields — one of the worst efforts King said he'd seen from a Little Giant squad.

"When coach told me I had the ball against Oak Harbor, I was ready to go," Mapus said. "I wanted the ball. I wasn't going to let coach take me out today. We wanted to beat those guys bad because we've struggled with them in the past."

Defense played a key role in Mapus and the Little Giants (3-1) earning redemption Saturday at the facility used by the Lake Erie Crushers of the independent Frontier League.

Unlike the Rockets (2-2), who committed five errors in the field and allowed another run to score on a passed ball, Ross had zero errors in the field and found a way out of any situation that was presented to it.

Twice, Oak Harbor had the

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Mapus

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bases loaded. Both times, Mapus and the defense got the outs.

“Strong defense will be the mark of our success this season,” King said. “This is probably the strongest defensive squad we’ve had since I’ve been here as the coach or as an assistant. I told the kids to take a look at the scoreboard after the game. It’s not about the runs, it’s about the fact that we had no errors again.

“As long as any of our pitchers can stay in the zone, I feel we can do a very good job defensively. We’ve had two errors in our last three games (all wins) where we had four our first day (a 6-1 loss to Clyde) and that was our only loss thus far.”

Ross struck first during the top of the first inning. Jalen Slick walked, stole second and advanced to third on a groundout, before being brought in a batter later on a sacrifice fly by Kole Amor.

The Little Giants took advantage of another leadoff walk in the third inning issued to Bryce Dukeshire. Slick advanced him on a nicely laid sacrifice bunt prior to Bryce Moreno bringing him to the plate on an RBI groundout.

Ross had one hit thru four innings, yet led 4-0. It had six total hits for the game.

“It was ugly defensively,” Rockets coach Rob Schimmoeller said. “(Ross)

has a lot of good talent and they gave us some chances but we just didn’t hit the baseball.

“Kyle (Uher) did his job on the mound for us. He came off the mound after five innings down 6-0 and he’d given up one earned run and a single hit. All the pitchers did a good job. We just didn’t field the ball today.”

Offensively, the Little Giants’ bats finally woke up a bit in the sixth inning. They scored six runs on four hits and took advantage of more Rocket mishaps to surge to a 12-run edge.

Mapus drove in a run during the onslaught with a single thru the middle of the infield.

“My stick has been a little shaky but I made an emphasis in the off-season to get stronger and get my bat going a little more,” Mapus said. “Coach (King) is going to need me, like a lot of us, to hit this year from losing a lot of our production from last year.”

Ben Genzman, Dillon Pollard and David Tooman each had single hits for Oak Harbor, which will host Woodmore on Monday.

Ross will play at Fostoria Monday, before hosting Toledo Central Catholic in its Three Rivers Athletic Conference opener on Wednesday. The game, originally scheduled to be played at Mercy Field in Toledo, was moved to Fremont due to a scheduling conflict.

KShields@gannett.com

419-334-1043

Twitter: @KShieldsNM

BASEBALL

Errors unlucky for Ross

Miscues costly
in TRAC defeat

By Josh Morgret

News-Messenger correspondent

FREMONT — Errors have yet to be a problem for the Fremont Ross baseball team.

But they reared their ugly head on Wednesday.

The Little Giants committed eight errors in an 11-3 loss to Toledo Central Catholic in their Three Rivers Athletic Conference opener at Alumni Fields.

The Fighting Irish (2-0, 1-0) scored quickly in the first inning as Derich Weiland led off with a triple then scored on a sacrifice fly by Ryan O'Hearn. Later, TCC loaded the bases on two walks and a single. However, Ross starting pitcher Andy Mapus got Cameron Best to ground out to end the inning.

Mapus and TCC starting pitcher Chad Kuebler both settled into a pitcher's duel into the Ross half of the fourth inning. With one out, Bryce Moreno, Kyle Amor, and Tanner Albert each singled with Albert's plating Moreno. After a strikeout, Mapus helped his own cause with a bloop single in front of DeShone Kizer in left field for a 3-1 lead.

"We got up 1-0 and we're swinging the bats really well but hitting it right to them," Irish coach Jeff Malcerik said. "It was nice to see us respond."

And oh did they respond. That's when everything went sour for the Little Giants (3-2, 0-1).

Weiland was hit by a pitch, O'Hearn singled and Colin Kaucher walked. Kizer, however grounded out with the bases loaded for the first out. Richard O'Donnell gave TCC the lead back on a two-run single. After a strike out, Best and Tommy Vetter each reached on errors by the Ross defense. Kam Weber and Weiland each singled in a run before a two-run double by O'Hearn ended the scoring. In all, the Irish went from a two-run deficit to a 9-3 lead.

Central Catholic added a run

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Baseball

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in the sixth inning on a single by Best and a run in the seventh on a run-scoring double by Patrick Schommer.

Mapus allowed eight runs, although just two were earned. He allowed seven hits and three walks. Albert pitched the final two innings, allowing two runs on three hits.

"I don't care what level you play at, you're not going to win with eight errors," Ross coach Mark King said. "Andy's pitching effort was A-list. He did what we asked him to do. He went out there and pitched like we needed him to

against the defending league champions."

Kuebler finished with a complete game for TCC, allowing just four hits, while striking out six and walking just one.

"I'm disappointed that we didn't showcase our defensive skills," King said. "We have a quality baseball team. We took good approaches at the plate, hit it hard but hit it right at them a lot of the time. I still like my team. We have a great amount of talent. We're a great team but we can't afford to give up runs."

Ross will look to rebound today when it travels to Woodmore for a 4:45 p.m. start.

ROUNDUP

Baseball: Fremont Ross 8, Woodmore 4

WOODVILLE — A day after committing eight errors in a league loss to the defending league champions (Toledo Central Catholic), the Little Giants' defense rebounded nicely, playing perfect in the field in Thursday's non-league victory over the Wildcats.

"To walk back out and play that kind of defense was great to see," Ross coach Mark King said. "In our four wins, we've committed a total of two errors, where as we have 12 in our two losses.

"We got some timely hitting when we needed it and Dominic (Cominsky) threw strikes and we played well behind him."

Ross (4-2) led 5-0 after two innings as Cominsky tossed six innings, giving up two earned runs on five hits with two strikeouts and two walks. Tanner Albert earned the save with a scoreless inning of relief where he struck out two and walked one.

Albert and Jalen Slick each had two hits and drove in a run for the Little Giants. Stefan Johnson had two hits and scored two runs. Catcher Kole Amor added an RBI.

Erich Gruelich, Brad Bringman and Tristan Roth all had doubles for Woodmore (1-3).

Baseball: Fremont Ross 11, Lima Senior 2

FREMONT — Jalen Slick allowed just two runs (one earned) and struck out five over seven innings Friday in a Three Rivers Athletic Conference win over the Spartans.

Slick also had a pair of hits and scored two runs for Ross (5-2, 1-1). The Little Giants' Bryce Moreno collected three hits, including a triple, and scored three runs, while Kole Amor chipped in a pair of hits and a double.

Knick Lippert went 2-for-2 with a two runs scored for Ross.

BASEBALL

Ross' bottom of the order steps up in defeat

By Kevin Shields
Sports writer

FREMONT — Moral victories in defeat aren't something the Fremont Ross baseball programs prides itself on.

But for a team that has struggled to hit the baseball — a .262 team batting average entering Saturday's doubleheader with baseball powers Tinora and Defiance — there were plenty of positives to take from two losses to two of the best teams in their respective divisions. Ross fell 6-1 to Tinora, a 2013 state semifinalist in Division IV and 6-3 to defending Division II state champion Defiance in a pair of games played at Alumni Fields.

The Little Giants (5-4) combined for 10 hits, five of which came from the seven, eight and nine hitters in their order. Nick Michel singled and drew two walks, Elijah Hampton singled twice and Bryce Dukeshire singled twice and reached base twice via bases on balls.

"We've had three kids that have scuffled and three kids that are absolutely locked in at the plate," Ross coach Mark King said. "The three kids that are locked in continued to hit today and of the three kids that were struggling, two of them swung the bat a lot better today. Hopefully, it just takes that hit or two to break us out and get us hitting all the way thru the lineup."

Defiance's bunt game, coupled with Ross' inability to cover the bunt, dominated the early part of Saturday's second game. Back-to-back bunt singles by Gage Cordray and Torrence Hicks got a run across the plate and another runner into scoring position in the second inning.

The Bulldogs (9-1) — 14-1 winners over Tiffin Columbian in Saturday's opener — led 3-0 after 1 1/2 innings.

"That's always been a pretty good weapon for us," said Bulldogs coach Tom Held of his team's abilities to bunt. "But Fremont played us tough. They competed all the way thru. I like that center fielder (Jalen Slick) and that catcher (Kole Amor) of theirs. They got some athletes in that group. I liked what I saw out of them."

Ross starter Andy Mapus surrendered six runs (one earned) on 10 hits. He struck out five, walked one and hit another batter but battled for big outs. He stranded three Defiance runners in the second inning to keep things from possibly getting ugly.

"I thought our pitchers gave us every opportunity to win both baseball games," King said. "Our pitching staff has been outstanding this year and today was no different. We just weren't taking good angles to baseballs and we had a couple errors on groundballs that all seemed to cost us."

Slick singled home a run in the second inning for a 3-1 deficit. Stefan Johnson's fielder's choice scored Amor in the third inning for a 4-2 Defiance lead.

The Little Giants seemed to have seized a little bit of the game's momentum when Amor's hit got past Bulldog shortstop Austin Hancock in the fourth inning for an error that got Ross within 4-3. That pushed seemed to die in the fifth in Defiance reliever Derek Turner got two strikeouts in a 1-2-3 inning.

"(Ross) was playing better baseball at that time than us," Held said. "I thought they had some good at bats."

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Bottom

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“I give Derek a lot of credit, though, he threw 51 pitches in the first game for us and battled for us in the second game, too.”

Bulldog catcher Tyler Weaver went 4-for-4 and drove home an insurance run in the seventh inning. Hancock and Cor-drax were each 2-for-4.

Dukeshire was 2-for-2 in the second game to pace the Ross offense.

Like the second game, the Little Giants fell behind the Rams (8-2) 3-0 after an inning and 5-1 thru 3 ½.

Bryce Moreno led the offense with a 2-for-3 effort and tallied the team's lone RBI.

“We just failed to execute big time in the early portions of both games, especially the first one,” King said. “I don't think we played that bad today. I thought we played pretty amicable. I mean we're talking about playing against two of the top teams in the state of Ohio, no matter what the division. Both of these teams were in Columbus last year for a reason.

“I think we got some talent on this team. We got a big week ahead, but I like my team.”

KShields@gannett.com

419-334-1043

Twitter: @KShieldsNM

ROUNDUP

Baseball: Fremont Ross 14, Cardinal Stritch 3

OREGON — Jalen Slick and Bryce Moreno both went 3-for-5 and drove in four runs as the Little Giants routed the Cardinals (6-2) — the preseason Toledo Area Athletic Conference favorite — in Monday's non-league tilt.

Ross (6-4) scored five runs in the fourth and six in the sixth inning, tallying 10 total hits, while it committed a single error in the field.

“This was the best team effort I’ve seen from our guys in the first 10 games,” Little Giants coach Mark King said.

Tanner Albert had two hits and an RBI, Andy Mapus drove in two runs and Elijah Hampton singled twice and scored three times.

Stritch had six errors in the field.

On the hill, Slick went the distance and surrendered three runs on seven hits. He struck out five and walked one.

Ross no match for Findlay's lefty

By Kevin Shields
Sports writer

Eight Little Giants strike out as Trojans grab 5-2 win

Amor tallied hits in the frame as Ross led 1-0.

FINDLAY — Though he'd only pitched once this spring before Wednesday's game against Fremont Ross, Findlay left-hander Connor Curlis looked every bit the pitcher in mid-season form. Curlis, who has made a verbal commitment to pitch at Ohio State, was outstanding in a six-inning performance that saw him strike out eight Little Giants as the Trojans earned a 5-2 Three Rivers Athletic Confer-

ence victory.

"He's missed the last 10 days, so it was great to see him come out and give us some good quality innings," Findlay coach Jeff Stutzman said. "He's special when he's on. He was getting ahead in counts and getting his curveball over for strikes, and when he can do that it makes him a pretty good pitcher."

Curlis allowed only two runs

(both unearned) on four hits.

Ross (6-5, 1-2) struck out 11 times as Jackson Geyer earned the save by striking out the side in the seventh inning.

"(Curlis) threw a great game," Little Giants coach Mark King said. "We knew he was tough coming in and we knew we were going to see him. He just got the better of us tonight.

"We played a quality baseball game. I can't sit here and tell you I'm upset with the kids. We just played a quality baseball team and got beat by a quality baseball team."

The Little Giants got to Curlis early. Bryce Moreno scored from third base in the first inning when Curlis overthrew first base on an attempted pick-off. Both Jalen Slick and Kole

Amor tallied hits in the frame as Ross led 1-0.

Little Giants' starter Tanner Albert got two outs on four pitches to start the Findlay (7-6, 3-1) first but a hit batsman and a walk later, Curlis tied the game with a two-out single through the right side.

The Trojans tallied single runs the next two innings and two more in the fourth, finishing with eight total hits.

"Tanner has great command,

See LEFTY, Page 6A

Lefty

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great stuff, great velocity and a great off-speed game," King said. "He just got himself into holes. No one was really sitting back and stinging him. He'd just put a guy on here or two guys there, which is like having an error. Other than that, he pitched a good game."

Albert allowed five runs (three earned) on seven hits. He struck out three, walked three and hit another batter.

Findlay three-hole hitter Grant Akin tallied the lone extra-base hit of the game, a double to right center in the sixth inning. Akin went 3-for-3 with an RBI and scored three times.

Curlis helped his own cause, going 2 for 3 with two RBIs.

Four of the Trojans' hits came with two outs.

"Getting the two-out hit is one thing we haven't done all year," Stutzman said. "But last night (a 4-0 win over Toledo St.

Francis de Sales) and tonight we got some of those.

"We're hoping that's a sign of good things to come."

Dominic Cominsky, who has proven to be a nice asset for Ross in the bullpen, relieved Albert in the fifth inning and threw two scoreless frames, surrendering one hit and striking out two.

"Dom (Cominsky) isn't a kid that has quite the same velocity as (Andy) Mapus and (Tanner) Albert but he's a kid who's going to pound the strike zone," King said. "That's exactly why we went with him late."

Albert's RBI groundout in the sixth inning was the lone RBI for Ross in the contest.

"We just got to get back to work tomorrow and worry about playing (Toledo) St. John's (Jesuit) on Friday," King said.

First pitch between the Little Giants and Titans is set for 5 p.m. at Alumni Fields.

KShields@gannett.com

419-334-1043

Twitter: @KShieldsNM

BHS	113	101	0	7	8	3
FRHS	000	113	0	5	10	4

WP: S. Halladay (5IP, 2ER, 3BB, 2K).

SV: Thomas Pressler.

LP: Andy Mapus (3IP, 2ER, 3BB, 5K).

Notable Hitting: BHS – Thomas Pressler 3-4, HR, 3R, RBI; Dylan Dewitt 2-3, 2B, SB, 3RBI; Josh McNeely 1-4, 3B, RBI; Ryan Vogel 1-3, 2B, R, 2RBI. FR —Mapus 2-4, RBI; Michael Hufford 3-4, R; Tanner Albert 2-3, 2R, RBI.

Records: Bellevue 9-5, Ross 6-6.

Little Giants can't break rut

By Josh Morgret
News-Messenger correspondent

Negative run continues in TRAC loss to Whitmer

FREMONT — Trailing by two runs with a runner on second and one out, the most ideal part of your lineup to have up would be the middle of the order.

That's what Fremont Ross had in the seventh inning Wednesday against Whitmer, but Panthers pitcher Devin Hergic got the final two outs to preserve an 11-9 Three Rivers Athletic Conference victory.

"I felt like it was a typical game between Ross and Whitmer," Whitmer coach Gary O'Connor said. "It's always great competition between us and them. They bring the best out of each other. They compete and we compete."

Down 11-5 headed into the bottom of the seventh, the Little Giants (6-8, 1-3 TRAC) took advantage of some sloppy pitching

to start a rally. A single, three walks and two wild pitches set up Bryce Moreno with runners on second and third. Moreno took the 1-0 pitch and drove it into the left center field gap to score two more runs. That brought up a hitless Kole Amor, but his struggles continued as he popped out to the pitcher. After Tanner Albert drew a walk, Andy Mapus grounded out to end

the game.

"The rally really scared us because we weren't throwing many strikes today," O'Connor said.

Run-scoring singles by Danny Tober and Sam Hickey put Whitmer (8-7, 3-3) up 2-0 in the first inning. Ross responded by hitting through their entire lineup, including a 2-run single by Michael Hufford and a RBI sin-

gle by Bryce Dukeshire.

The Panthers responded with two runs of their own in the second inning on RBI singles by Tyler Schneider and Devin Dempsey. Ross quickly regained the lead in the bottom half. Albert reached on an error, allowing Moreno to score. Later, Mapus' single scored Albert for a 5-4 lead after two innings.

Whitmer took the lead for good in the third inning. With

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Rut

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two runners in scoring position, No. 9 hitter Shemus Dempsey laced a single to left field to score two runs. He went to second on the play and after he stole third, he would score on a wild pitch.

The Panthers added a run in the fifth on a single by Jacob Zop and three in the seventh on the strength of four hits and a fielding error by Ross.

"It's the story of what's been taking place lately in this negative run," Ross coach Mark King said. "We give up extra outs to our opponents and can't get out of innings. Offensively, we put runners on but couldn't get the big hit."

Dominic Cominsky suffered the loss

for Ross in relief of Mapus. Cominsky allowed three runs on four hits while striking out two. Mapus gave up eight runs on 12 hits.

For the Little Giants, it's their sixth loss in the last seven games after starting the season 5-2.

"I don't think we're playing to our level of play," King said. "I feel like I have a talented group of players but we're just not playing as well as we can."

Ian Galenbieski was the winning pitcher for Whitmer. He got the last out of the sixth inning and the first out in the seventh inning. In between, he allowed four runs on two hits and three walks.

"I feel good about our club right now," O'Connor said. "We played bad early on in the season but our bats are coming around and the pitching is getting better."

Baseball: St. Francis de Sales 10, Fremont Ross 1

TOLEDO — Tanner Albert allowed nine runs off eight hits and six walks over 5 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings Friday as the Little Giants fell to the Knights in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference.

Bryce Moreno and Nick Michael each singled for Ross (6-10, 1-4).

Slick, Little Giants slow Columbian

By Josh Morgret

News-Messenger correspondent

FREMONT — As Fremont Ross pitcher Jalen Slick delivered a pitch in the seventh inning of Saturday's game against Tiffin Columbian, the howling wind blew his hat off.

Slick shrugged that off, as well as many Columbian hitters for a three-hit shutout, leading the Little Giants to a 9-0 non-league victory at Alumni Fields.

"Jalen did a excellent job today," Ross coach Mark King said. "He did exactly we what we needed him to do. He was around the zone today and changed speeds well all day. He made Columbian put the ball in play and when they had scoring opportunities, he got big strikeouts."

The Little Giants (7-10) wasted little time giving Slick some offensive support.

Catcher Kole Amor ripped a double to right field to score Slick in the opening inning and later Bryce Dukeshire was hit by a pitch with the bases loaded to bring Amor in.

That is when Slick went to work.

He allowed a second inning walk but a strikeout and a soft groundout ended the inning. Garrett Bean was hit by a pitch in the third inning but Amor fired him out at second base trying to steal. Slick walked Christian Magill and

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Slick

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future Ross player Russ Yeast but a double play sent the Tornados (10-6) back on defense.

Ross put three more runs on the board in each of the fourth and fifth innings. Nick Michael's RBI double scored Dukeshire. After a strikeout and Slick walked, a wild pitch by starter Tyler Hossler allowed a run to score. Kole Amor grounded out later, but Slick scored on the play.

"The problem lately was not hitting the ball in big chances and not being able to put hits together," King said. "We did the little things right and had only one error. That was big. Today was a total team effort."

The Tornados looked to respond quickly in the top of the fifth inning. Bean reached on an error and went to second on a wild pitch. Magill singled to shallow centerfield, putting runners on second and third with no outs for the top of the order. Slick quietly responded with a strikeout of Yeast before getting

John Van Camp to pop out to Elijah Hampton at shortstop. Jeffrey Crawford grounded out to Andy Mapus at third base to end the threat.

"We struggled offensively today," Columbian coach Curt Mellott said. "We didn't string good at-bats together. Their record doesn't indicate it, but Fremont Ross is a good team."

Mapus and Michael Hufford doubled to open the fifth inning. A wild pitch scored Mapus and Michael's single brought in Hufford. A fielder's choice hit by Slick scored Dukeshire for a 8-0 lead.

Slick allowed three hits and five walks while striking out six.

He threw 104 pitches in the complete game effort.

Hossler suffered the loss, allowing five runs on four hits and four walks in 3 1/3 innings.

For Ross, the win is a beautiful sight to see, having lost eight of their previous nine games. They won't be able to celebrate long, as a murderer's row of league opponents wait next week.

"The kids need to keep believing in themselves and stay focused in big opportunities," King said. "We can't give extra outs. We have to keep positive."

Baseball: Toledo Central Catholic 13, Fremont Ross 2

TOLEDO — The Fighting Irish scored nine runs in the third inning Monday to turn a 4-2 game into a 11-run rout in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference game played at Mercy Field.

Nick Michael had two hits for the Little Giants (7-11, 1-5) who also got a double each from Bryce Moreno and Andy Mapus.

HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL



Fremont Ross' Elijah Hampton collides with a Sandusky baserunner during a baseball game on Thursday. JONATHAN BIRD/NEWS-MESSENGER PHOTOS

Little Giants unravel in loss

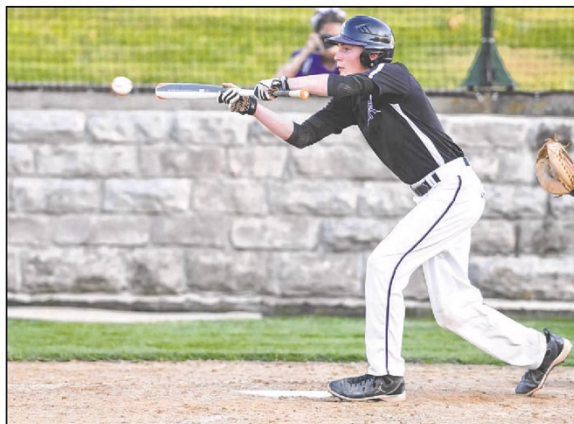
Sandusky earns 10-7 victory

By Kevin Shields
Sports writer

VICKERY — Maybe it was the country air? Or maybe it was the uncanny warm temperatures?

Either way, Thursday evening's battle between rivals Fremont Ross and Sandusky under the lights at Bob Gray's Field of Dreams turned into a crazy affair.

The Little Giants spotted the Blue Streaks six runs in the opening inning, then battled back to tie it an inning later. But Ross' inability to make key defensive plays proved too costly. Sandusky took advantage of seven Little Giant errors, including three in a three-run fourth



Fremont Ross' Bryce Dukeshire bunts during a baseball game against Sandusky on Thursday.

inning as the Blue Streaks earned a 10-7 win in the non-league tilt.

"It was definitely a crazy

game," Blue Streaks coach Zach Moots said. "It was a little back and forth. We started hot but Fremont did a nice

job of battling back. But we came back and a lot of our young guys played well tonight, so I was impressed."

Sandusky (6-14) started two freshmen and three sophomores Thursday.

"We could have shut down after that six-run inning by Ross, and earlier in the season that's probably what we would have done," Moots said. "The mental blocks hit us early in the season, which our record shows, but as of late we've started turning it on and those guys have grown up."

The Blue Streaks seized the game's momentum early as pitcher Brady McKillips reached base to leadoff on a botched fly ball at first base. After a bunt single, Joey Herriott brought McKillips

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TRAC BASEBALL

Ross keeps riding roller coaster

Little Giants drop
game to St. Francis

By Kevin Shields
Sports writer

TOLEDO — The Fremont Ross baseball team continues to ride the roller coaster that's defined its 2014 campaign.

Four days after the Little Giants topped Ashland (3-1) to win a sectional championship, and three days after they scored 13 runs in the first four innings of a 13-8 win over Clay, that other Ross team showed up again Tuesday in the opening round of the Three Rivers Athletic Conference tournament.

St. Francis de Sales needed only eight hits in a 10-1 victory that saw the Knights take advantage of four Little Giant errors and six pitched balls that ended up hitting the backstop.

"We're that two-headed monster kind of team right now," Ross coach Mark King said. "One night, you don't want to play us because we're pretty good. The other night, we're that monster that hurts ourselves."

"What team am I going to get one night when we come out is the question."

The Little Giants (10-14) will play Anthony Wayne in a Division I district semifinal at 7:15 p.m. Thursday at Bowling Green's Carter Park.

"I'm going to tip my cap to St. Francis tonight," King said. "We got beat by a better team. But we got to get back to work (Wednesday) and can't play against Anthony Wayne like we did tonight. We have to get back to where we were Friday and Saturday if we want to have a chance to be successful. We have to get off the roller coaster and get on the merry-go-round."

The Knights (17-6), the second seed in the TRAC's North Division, scored their first two runs of the game on passed balls in the first and second innings, with only one hit on the scoreboard. It wasn't until leadoff hitter Andy Okuley's RBI single later in the second inning that St. Francis scored a run off a hit.

Casey Johnson's two-RBI single through the left side of the infield gave the Knights a 5-0 lead after three innings. Johnson led all St. Francis hitters with two hits, while his two RBIs were a game high.

Small ball and constant pressure on the opposing defense is a specialty of Tim Gerken's team, which makes them one of the last teams you want to help with passed balls and wild pitches.

"We're a pretty unique

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Ross

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team,” said Gerken, the coach of the Knights. “We’ve been swinging it pretty well, and obviously, (starting pitcher) Joe (DiPierro) was really good in the middle of the diamond today. That was the difference in the game. He was able to work his way through (Ross’) lineup and get us into the sixth inning, which we were a little concerned about trying to play in this tournament and the state tournament.”

DiPierro threw 5½ in-

nings, allowing Ross a single earned run on three hits. He struck out nine and hit one batter.

Bryce Dukeshire was the lone Little Giant with multiple hits, finishing 2-for-3. Nick Michael’s RBI double in fourth inning scored Andy Mapus from second base for Ross’ lone run of the contest.

Like Ross, St. Francis also will play a Northern Lakes League team in Thursday’s Division I district tournament as it will face Springfield in a bracket opposite of St. John’s Jesuit and Sylvania Southview.

“This is kind of an annual thing now (playing

the TRAC tournament and OHSAA tournaments together), and sometimes you’re a victim of your own success,” Gerken said. “You can’t argue about that. Some people do, but I’ll play everyday if it means playing for some kind of championship. This what our league chooses to do, and it’s a lot of fun. We’ll all have a fun Memorial Day weekend because of this league tournament, and hopefully one of us will get of districts and do some damage in the state.”

KShields@gannett.com

419-334-1043

Twitter: @KShieldsNM