

Early Exit for Little Giants

Madison stymies Ross 7-2

By TIM HARMON
Staff writer

NORWALK — A two-inning stretch of Saturday's Division I sectional baseball game was the downfall of Fremont Ross.

Mansfield Madison snuffed out two Ross rallies in the bottom of the fourth and fifth and scored six runs in the top of the sixth for a 7-2 victory over the Little Giants at Bill Baines Park.

Madison, 11-7, will play Sandusky at 4:30 p.m. Tuesday in the sectional final. Sandusky, the top seed, defeated Madison last year in the sectional title game when the Rams were 20-1 and the top-seeded team.

"We're going to have to play a perfect game to beat (the Blue Streaks)," Madison coach Tim Rupert said.

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Ross, 8-10, took a 1-0 lead into the fourth. The Little Giants had scored an unearned run in the first off Ben Singer. In the top of the fourth, Madison tied the game with an unearned run off Steve Fox.

Justin Perry opened the Ross fourth with a single, and Brian Myers reached on a fielder's choice. Perry was safe at second on Myers' grounder when Madison second baseman Rod Rickert dropped Mike Nikolaus' relay from short.

Nick Wolf was a strikeout victim for the first out. After a

passed ball moved the runners up, Doug Fitzgerald lined to Rickert, who doubled Perry off second.

In the fifth, Alec Shawl reached on a dropped third strike with two outs. Kurt Varyan's smash down the third base line was ticketed for extra bases, but Madison's Jeremy Brown stabbed the ball behind the bag and threw a strike to first to end the threat.

Their third baseman made a helluva play to kill that inning. Ross coach Steve Ebert said, "If we get those runs in, it's a different game."

"You don't know they're going to have a big inning."

The Rams collected three of their six hits in the sixth, and

Fox walked three.

"We wanted to go as long as we could with Fox," Ebert said. "He was getting a little tired, but that's just a matter of concentration with his form on his part."

Rob Weiker came in to pitch after Fox uncorked ball four to the backstop to Madison leadoff man Tim Applegate. Weiker walked Nikolaus before Singer delivered a two-run single.

"The last four or five games we've been moving the ball (making contact)," Rupert said. "Early in the season we were striking out a lot."

Singer struck out six, walked three and hit a batter. He allowed five hits, including a lead-off single to Allan Dorsey and

Paul Rostetter's RBI single in the seventh.

"He's been struggling," Rupert said. "He lost the last two games in relief in the last inning. He remembered those other experiences today and getting the lead helped."

The Little Giants stranded Myers and Wolf with two outs in the sixth. Singer opened the inning with two strikeouts before Myers singled and Wolf walked. Fitzgerald, though, was a strike-out victim.

"We left too many on base (eight, including Rostetter after pinch runner Scott Root was thrown out at third to end the game)," Ebert said. "We were on (Singer), they just didn't drop."