

Tournament Road Ends at Regionals

Ross eliminated from regionals

Westerville
shuts down
Little Giants

By TIM HARMON
Staff writer

WESTERVILLE — Postgame comments from Westerville North baseball coach Bob Haegele and Fremont Ross Coach Dan Fought after Thursday's Class AAA regional tournament semifinal game tell the story.

"Another day at the office," said Haegele after the Warriors shut out the Little Giants 8-0 at Otterbein College.

Said Fought: "We had fun getting here."

In essence, Ross, 15-8, found out why North finished the regular season as the top-ranked team in the Ohio High School Baseball Coaches Association poll, and is ranked in the top 10 of some national polls — the Warriors are loaded with offensive weapons and their pitching is close to unhittable.

North, 31-1, scored six runs on four hits in the first inning. Eric Bagley provided the only run the Warriors would need when he opened the game with a home run.

Tim Smith and Bob Worley limited Ross to one hit — a lead-off single by Aaron Meade. Smith, who got the win, started and pitched through the fourth inning, striking out 10. Worley worked the final three innings, fanning eight.

"We were a little nervous," said Fought. "It was the first

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News-Messenger/Chris Walker

TONY PATRICK of Ross tags out Westerville North's Eric Bagley after Scott Mezinger fielded Bagley's ground ball but threw wildly to first dur-

ing the sixth inning of the Warriors regional tournament win over the Little Giants Thursday at Otterbein College.

Giants

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time (the Little Giants) were in a big game like this.

"They tried their hardest, and that's all I can ask of them."

After North rocked Craig Raney in the first, the Ross right-hander checked the Warriors on four hits, giving up just a pair of unearned runs.

Ross, meanwhile, had just six base runners and only Meade advanced as far as third.

"Craig (Raney) did a nice job after the (first inning)," said Fought. "I still felt confident. I believe in the kids, but I knew it would be tough (to come back) because we don't score seven runs that often."

North will play Columbus Waterson at 1 p.m. Saturday at Otterbein. The Eagles edged Toledo St. Francis 2-1 in Thursday's other semifinal at Findlay High School.

"The only thing I'm dissatisfied with is that we didn't go after it in every inning," said Haegele. "We like to score in every inning. It's something that every good team does."

After Bagley's home run, a walk to Mike Verne and a single by Mike Enz put runners on first and third. K.C. Gillum's ground-rule double scored Verne. A walk to Paul Nickel was followed by Matt Bagley's two-run single. Raney then hit Steve Allie. After a double steal, James DeSantis's suicide squeeze bunt scored Bag-

ley and the play at first allowed Allie to race home from second.

Nickel opened the North third inning with a double, moved to third on a wild pitch and scored on a single by Allie.

The Warriors capped the scoring in the sixth inning. Brian Ray walked and went to second on a wild pitch. The North right fielder moved to third after Mark Gonzalez ranged far to his right to field a ground ball off the bat of Verne but threw wildly to first. Ray scored on a flyball to left by Gillum.

"(Westerville North) is a good team," said Fought. "I wouldn't be surprised if they win the state."

Said Haegele: "We're excited."

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