

2016 Season Review

RECORD NUMBERS READY TO PLAY BALL



The Fremont Ross baseball team looks on from the dugout during a game against Toledo Central Catholic last season.

N-M ARCHIVE

Little Giants excited about youth movement; softball ready to reap the benefits of experience

RICH MCGOWAN
REPORTER

FREMONT — Given the excitement Fremont Ross baseball coach Mark King exudes when talking about the upcoming season, one might think the Little Giants are contenting for the league championship with a bevy of returning starters with proven, big-game experience.

In actuality, however, Ross is coming off an 11-16-1 season and returns little, to no, varsity experience beyond that of its lone returning starter, short-stop-pitcher Grant Gallagher.

Though the stats on paper indicate Ross is set up for a bumpy road of a season filled with growing pains, King believes the Little Giants are at the dawn of a very bright day.

"We had 56 kids come out for baseball this year, that's an all-time record for Fremont Ross and, out of those 56, 32 were freshmen. The future is extremely bright," King said. "I've never had more than one freshman break camp with us and go to opening day and we're starting three. Two for sure (left fielder Noah Hotz and right fielder Brandon Schneider) and a third (outfielder/first baseman Carson Wojdujla) on given days."

Ross opens its season Saturday at 4:30 at home hosting Tiffin Columbian. If the Little Giants' preseason scrim-



The Fremont Ross softball team breaks a huddle during a game against Findlay last season.

N-M ARCHIVE

mages are an accurate indication of the season the come, King believes Ross will have no problem remaining competitive with older, more experienced teams.

"Through those scrimmages we've shown a great amount of energy and a great amount of desire to learn," King said. "We're young so we don't have a lot of bad habits because we don't have a lot of habits."

"Defensively I think we're very strong. It was a big issue for us last year," he added. "When we scrim-

maged Perkins and Norwalk it took us 12 innings to make our first error. Out of two games and 14 innings we made two errors."

That defense will need to be strong as the pitching, while having a good amount of depth, won't necessarily be overpowering opposing lineups. Gallagher, Dalton Welty and Trevor Brown will be the Little Giants' top three of a staff will run seven or eight arms deep, but all will need their fielders to re-

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main sharp behind them.

“You’re not going to see us striking out a ton of kids,” King said. “But that can help your defense, if you’re on your toes expecting the ball to come in play.”

At the plate, Gallagher, who hit .333 last season, is the only player with a large sample of varsity at-bats. As a result, King is expecting the offense to perhaps start slow, but improve as the season progresses.

“Our big question mark will be at the plate,” King said. “I don’t think you’re going to see us hitting too many gaps or too many walls or playing with any kind of big power game. We’re going to have to work at hitting aggressively and trying to hit line drives through holes and hitting consistently with a bigger focus on the small game we haven’t probably utilized in the past. You’ll probably see us bunt a little more, run a little bit more.”

ROSS' ICKES PITCHES WELL AGAINST COLUMBIAN



MOLLY CORFMAN/THE NEWS-MESSENGER

Ross' Brandon Schneider, right, makes a catch against Tiffin Columbian on Tuesday afternoon.

MATTHEW HORN
REPORTER

Fremont Ross sophomore Trey Ickes threw his first varsity pitch Tuesday.

A short time later, Ickes notched his first two strikeouts with two runners on base to cap the top of the first inning. Ickes was solid overall in the Little Giants' 5-2 non-conference setback to Tiffin Columbian.

"They threw well enough to win that game," Ross coach Mark King said.

"They scored four unearned runs. They commanded the strike zone all night. He got better command of the zone the longer he went.

"For his first varsity outing, that's a nice outing. He'll give us the opportunity to win."

Ickes struck out four and walked four while allowing four hits and five runs in 4 1/3 innings.

"My game plan was to throw strikes," Ickes said. "I did that for the most part."

Columbian scored twice in the third and fifth innings and once in the first.

"We hurt ourselves early in the outfield," King said. "You can't give extra opportunities. We'll have to play through some youth mistakes early and grow. We bring back one starter. One thing about a young club—they're eager to learn.

"The negative is lack of experience. They don't have a lot of bad habits be-

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MOLLY CORFMAN/THE NEWS-MESSENGER

Ross' Grant Gallagher loses control of the ball at 3rd base against Tiffin Columbian on Tuesday afternoon.

Baseball

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cause they don't have habits. We showed positive signs. We have 27 more games."

Junior shortstop Grant Gallagher is the only returning starter for Ross (0-1). He made a diving catch for the third out in the fourth.

Seniors Dalton Welty (second base), Jack White (third base) and Trevor Brown (first base) earned letters last year.

Center fielder Jacob Paxson is a junior and catcher Josiah Cook is a sophomore. Left fielder Noah Hotz, designated hitter Karson Wojdyla and right fielder Brandon Schneider are freshmen.

Welty and White each scored in the third Tuesday as Gallagher and Paxson had RBI singles.

Austin Prenzlin struck out four and walked four while allowing seven hits and two runs for Columbian. Prenzlin pitched for Tiffin Calvert's varsity team last season.

"I did my job throwing strikes," Prenzlin said. "The defense helped me. I let the ball get away from me a bit (in the fourth), but I regrouped. We put the ball in play."

King will insist on consistent energy and effort from his roster as it works to improve.

"Grant has to be a leader as a junior and lead by example," King said. "He hit well and made a few nice plays at short. He embraced his role."

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Ten Little Giants earn first varsity win

MATTHEW HORN
REPORTER

Fremont Ross committed 10 errors and lost its first two games.

Ten of 14 Little Giants earned their first varsity win Tuesday as Ross defeated visiting Port Clinton 7-5 in a non-conference matchup.

The Redskins' Aidan Rospert stole third and scored for a 4-2 lead in the fifth on the Little Giants' only error Tuesday.

"We have to create something on the bases," Port Clinton coach Tracy Bodi said. "That's the approach with Aidan. With Nolan (Smith). With Mitchell (Mueller). With Ben (Mueller). Those guys can manufacture runs."

Ross (1-2) lost its first two games despite a team ERA of 0.96. Sophomore Trey Ickes started Tuesday and allowed two runs before Dalton Welty finished on the mound.

"Trey was in command the first three innings," Little Giants coach Mark King said. "He lost a little command and he's young. It got to his confidence and we went with Welty. That was some bulldog stuff (from Welty)."

"We know we're young and we'll make young mistakes. We didn't give them extra opportunities."

The Little Giants committed only two errors in their four preseason scrimmages. Trever Brown, Grant Gallagher, Jack White and Welty earned letters last season.

"He was able to hit his spots," Brown said of Welty. "Dalton (threw) first-pitch strikes, which is huge. Once we play together we can make plays. The defense was really strong."

Brown had three RBIs and scored a run Tuesday, Gallagher scored three runs and Noah Hotz added two RBIs. White scored two runs, Karson Wojdyla scored once and Josiah Cook added an RBI.

"He's improved his approach and work ethic at the plate," King said of Brown. "Trever is a talented player, but he lacked in work ethic. He's worked hard in the offseason and taken a leadership role. He's taken some quality cuts and been aggressive with nothing to show for it."

The Little Giants took the lead for good at 5-4 with three runs in the fifth.

"We had to keep the positive mentality we always have," Brown said. "We weren't out of it. You have to keep battling and get the sticks going."

Rospert also drove in a run in the fifth and scored in the fourth. Drew Fodor, Trevor Frias and Mitchell Mueller, who ran for Stone Scott after a walk, each

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scored one run and Noah Smith added three RBI for Port Clinton.

“That’s what we’re

looking for,” Bodi said of Smith’s two-run single. “We have some seniors with experience and we’ll look for them to step up. We need more than one.”

Frias started on the mound for the Redskins and allowed two runs in

his four innings. He struck out five, including three in the third, but lost his command in the fourth.

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YOUNGSTERS MAKE FIRST STARTS FOR CLYDE IN VICTORY



MOLLY CORFMAN/THE NEWS-MESSANGER

Ross' Grant Gallagher makes a catch in the 4th inning.

MATTHEW HORN
REPORTER

Mikey Haynes made his first varsity start on the mound and Cam Farrar joined him at first base as visiting Clyde defeated Fremont Ross 13-6 in a non-conference matchup.

"I had some goosebumps riding on the bus over here," Farrar said. "I just wanted to play my game. I thank Coach (George Parks) for the opportunity. I'm glad I experienced the atmosphere. We were having fun and talking. My dad and my brother told me to keep my head straight."

Farrar, a freshman, had two hits in his debut. Farrar's older brother, Clayton, graduated from Clyde and played at Notre Dame College last season.

Haynes allowed two unearned runs in three innings and left with the Fliers ahead 5-2. Clyde scored four runs in the top of the second and five in the fifth.

"We bounced back from a tough loss," Parks said of a 3-1 setback to Perkins. "We weren't very aggressive (Wednesday) and we challenged the guys to come out swinging. We got a couple guys on early. We stole some bases. We got a lead and could relax a little. A couple guys who haven't been hitting had hits."

"We had young guys step up." John Jackson broke a cold streak with two hits for Clyde (4-1). Ryan Kelley had two hits and drove in three runs and Frank Sewell added two RBI. Walker Cooper pitched four innings

in relief for the win on the mound.

"We threw strikes and limited the walks," Parks said.

Noah Hotz drove in three runs for the Little Giants (1-4). Jake Paxson had a two-run double as Ross scored four in the fifth.

"We gave them way too many extra outs," Little Giants coach Jared King said. "Two in the first and one in the second. We dug a hole. We had six errors. We need to cut that. We kept chipping away .. continuing to fight. We played better defense as it went along."

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Toledo St. Francis 14, Fremont Ross 0 (5 Innings)

The Little Giants fell at home on Friday in a five inning mercy to visiting Toledo St. Francis. Toledo St. Francis had eight hits to Ross' four; Ross also had four errors.

Fremont Ross' Gallagher Grant took the loss allowing four hits and eight runs; Grant also went 2-for-2 at the plate. Noah Hotz and Welty Dalton both went 1-for-2 on the day.

Toledo St. Francis was led by Watts and Denman who both went 1-for-1 at the plate; Watts had three RBIs and one run scored while Denman had two RBIs and three runs scored.

HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL

Welty leads Fremont Ross over Lima

MATTHEW HORN
REPORTER

Fremont Ross coach Mark King was thrilled to have Dalton Welty on the mound Monday for obvious reasons.

King also felt fortunate because of Welty's focus and energy in a 6-4 victory over visiting Lima Senior in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference.

"He threw extremely well," King said. "He was the difference in the win. He had good command - take away the

one inning and he held them to one run. He mixed up his looks and cut his walks down. Dalton has the ability to change speed.

"We needed him to go deep (into the game)."

Welty struck out nine and walked four while allowing three hits and four runs (two earned) in seven innings.

"I was looking to (get ahead in the count)," Welty said. "The team played defense. (Shortstop) Grant (Gallagher) made a nice plan and Noah Hotz had a

couple nice catches in center field. It was a good league win."

With the exception of Welty, the Little Giants (3-7, 1-1) were mostly lifeless until the bottom of the sixth. Welty, Jack White and Gallagher each scored one run for a 6-4 advantage.

Hotz had a sacrifice fly and Garrett Schneider came off the bench with an RBI-single. Lima Senior (1-9, 0-3) scored three runs in the fifth, but Josiah Shoemaker took the loss.

"Keep plugging away and good things

happen," Schneider said of the team's mindset coming from behind. "You have to go when Coach calls on you and step up and make a play."

White singled and scored when Trevor Brown walked in the third. Josiah Cook and Nick Farrier each scored in the fourth and Gallagher had a sacrifice fly for a 3-1 lead.

"We're a young club," King said. "We have to come out with more intensity and effort."

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BASEBALL

Oregon Clay 5, Fremont Ross 0

The Little Giants fell on the road Wednesday to host Oregon Clay. Oregon Clay had nine hits to Ross' six hits.

Ross' Trevor Brown pitched a complete game taking the loss, allowing five runs on nine hits and throwing five strikeouts; Brown added two hits. Josiah Cook, Garrett Schneider, Nick Farrier and Grant Gallagher all added a hit each.

Oregon Clay's Linghor got the win pitching a complete game, allowing zero runs on six hits and throwing eight strikeouts; Linghor added a hit and an RBI as well. Jacobs, Mohr, Yenrick and Quinlan all had a hit apiece with Quinlan having two RBIs and a run scored while Jacobs added an RBI. Walter and Orr were both 2-for-4 with Walter scoring twice and Orr scoring once.



Fremont Ross's Brandon Schneider singles Saturday against Sandusky.

PHOTOS BY MATTHEW HORN/THE NEWS-MESSENGER

LATE RALLY DOOMS LITTLE GIANTS

MATTHEW HORN
REPORTER

VICKERY - Fremont Ross allowed Ryan Hollingshed to break open a close game with a three-run double in the seventh inning Saturday in a 6-2 non-conference setback to rival Sandusky at Field of Dreams.

Little Giants pitcher Dalton Welty allowed three runs through the first six innings in cold, wet conditions that slowly intensified as the game progressed.

"He threw very well early," Ross coach Jared King said. "He was up in the zone with the first two (Sandusky) runs. He buckled down, mixed his pitches and gave us a chance. He pitched well enough to win."

Jack White scored on an RBI from Trever Brown and White drove in Dalton as the game was tied 2-2 before the Blue Streaks (7-8) scored the go-ahead run in the top of the fifth.

"We got hits when we needed," said Sandusky's Nathan Delk, who was active on the base paths. "We try to steal and put pressure on the defense and make it tough on the opponent."

Ross (3-15) struggled with errors, a recurring theme.

"The story of the year is too many extra outs," King said. "Errors and mental mistakes bite us. The kids have stayed positive and they battle every day. I give them credit."

"We need to find ways to close it out."

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Fremont Ross's Dalton Welty makes contact .

Toledo St. Francis 6, Fremont Ross 4

The Little Giants (3-16, 1-9) fell on the road Wednesday to the host Knights. Ross had seven hits and one error while Toledo St. Francis had eight hits and two errors.

Ross' Trey Ickes took the loss pitching two innings, allowing two runs on three hits while walking one batter and striking out two followed by Jacob Paxson pitching the last four innings, allowing four runs on five hits while walking four and throwing five strikeouts. Trevor Brown was 3-for-4 with an RBI and a run scored alongside Dalton Welty, Grant Gallagher, Josiah Cook and Nick Farrier all added a hit each with Gallagher, Cook and Farrier having an RBI apiece; Farrier scored a run as well.

The Knights were led by Smith who got the win pitching four innings, allowing one run on four hits and throwing five strikeouts; Smith also scored a run. Watts went 3-for-3 with two runs scored while White, Martin and Mildenburger all had a hit each with White and Mildenburger having two RBIs apiece.

FREMONT ROSS 15, MARGARETTA 14

ROSS COMES BACK TO TOP MARGARETTA



MOLLY CORFMAN/THE NEWS-MESSENGER

Fremont Ross shortstop Grant Gallagher throws to first Thursday.

MATTHEW HORN
REPORTER

Fremont Ross trailed by seven after the first inning Thursday and nine in the bottom of the fourth against visiting Margarettta.

The Little Giants still faced a two-run deficit with two outs in the seventh, but topped the Polar Bears 15-14 on Garrett Schneider's walk-off single.

Ross (4-16) trailed 14-8 entering its final at-bats. Schneider led off with a single before Dalton Welty and Jack White did the same with one out.

Grant Gallagher greeted Margarettta's bullpen with an RBI single before

Trever Brown did the same. Gallagher and Brown scored on Josiah Cook's double with two outs.

Cook scored as Jacob Paxson reached on an error and Paxson scored the game-winning run as Schneider batted for a second time in the inning. Dylan Smith scored on a wild pitch as a pinch-runner in the seventh.

"You have to make a play," Schneider said of his final at-bat. "I got down 1-2 and he threw a fastball down the plate and I got ahold of it. This is definitely one of my favorites.

"This will go down as a pretty good memory. It's a great moment to make a play when I was asked. It's a great les-

son to the team - never give up and keep plugging away."

Such a lesson was learned with a positive reward Thursday because of two youngsters. Schneider and Karson Wojdyla, who didn't allow a run in 3 2/3 innings of relief to earn his first win, are freshmen.

"The job Karson did with one inning at varsity coming in ... if you throw strikes you can succeed," Little Giants coach Mark King said. "He changed speeds a bit."

Wojdyla retired the first five batters he faced and nine of the first 10,

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although that runner was caught stealing. He allowed one hit.

"Throw strikes and have the defense do their jobs," Wojdyla said. "I hit my spots. I knew I had to throw strikes. The excitement built. We kept picking away scoring runs and coming back."

Logan Graffin doubled twice, scored twice and drove in a run in the first inning for Margareta (9-11). Kaleb Carpenter drove in three and scored twice and Brycen Aceto made the defensive play of the game at second base as he speared a liner up the middle and slithered on his stomach to touch the bag with his glove for a double play.

"He's got quick hands," Polar Bears coach Gregg Hedden said of Graffin. "He's a good hitter when he's focused. He's a sophomore. He's learning the game while relying on natural ability."

Ross struggled defensively throughout, but prevented damage later in the game. White capped a three-run rally with an RBI-single in the fifth.

Schneider was 4-for-5 with singles in his final four at-bats, Cook had three hits, including two doubles and Welty and White each reached base five times and scored three runs. Gallagher added a two-run single in the second.

"Over the last five or six games, we've swung the bats better," King said. "We had some quality at-bats. You rarely come back from down nine. Our Achilles all year is the inability to make a play.

"We spotted them some runs. You have to make plays. We've struggled this year but I'm proud of their character to battle to the last out no matter the score or opponent."

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ROUNDUP

BASEBALL

Fremont Ross 8, Findlay 2

Trever Brown told Grant Gallagher before that game that he wanted to do something special for Senior Night.

Brown struck out five and walked two while allowing two runs (one earned) and three hits in seven innings for the Three Rivers Athletic Conference victory on the mound.

“He did (something big),” Gallagher said. “He had great control and kept their hitters off-balance.”

Josiah Cook stayed hot with three hits, two runs and an RBI, Gallagher had two hits, scored once and drove in a run and Jack White walked twice and scored two runs for the Little Giants (5-16, 2-9). Ross scored six runs in the fourth.

“Josiah is a gym-rat,” Gallagher said. “He puts in the extra work. It’s beginning to pay off for him and the team. Getting hot at the right time.”

White, Brown, Dalton Welty, Nick Farrier and Darion Walker are seniors for Ross.

BASEBALL

BROWN, TURCO HEAD ALL-DISTRICT PICKS



FILE PHOTO

Oak Harbor's Caleb Turco was recognized first-team all-District 9.



MATTHEW HORN/THE NEWS-MESSENGER

Fremont Ross' Trever Brown was recognized first-team all-District 9, and Gallagher was second-team.



FILE PHOTO

Clyde's Nate Gittinger was recognized honorable mention all-District 9.

STAFF REPORT

Trever Brown of Fremont Ross was recognized first-team all-District 9 in Division I for baseball.

The Little Giants' Grant Gallagher was second-team and Dalton Welty earned honorable mention.

Bellevue's Bryce Ray and Clyde's Frank Sewell were first-team in Division II. Cody Snyder was second-team and Joe Wetten was honorable mention for the Redmen.

Nate Gittinger was honorable mention for the Fliers.

Drew Fodor was honorable mention for Port Clinton.

Oak Harbor's Caleb Turco was first-team, Dean Kellogg second-team and David Tooman honorable mention in Division III.

Margaretta's Tyler Henderson was second-team and Jacob Luma was honorable mention.

Lakota's Josh Mason was first-team in Division IV. Dakota Gilbert was honorable mention.

Jacob Webb was second-team and Hootie Cleveland honorable mention for Old Fort.

St. Joseph Central Catholic's Ben Wonderly was honorable mention.

Anthony Wayne's Alex Vogel (Division I), Mansfield Madison's Zane Harris (Division II), Western Reserve's Vince Lonigro (Division III) and Mohawk's Austin Harper (Division IV) earned player of the year status.



MOLLY CORFMAN/THE NEWS-MESSENGER

Port Clinton's Drew Fodor was recognized honorable mention all-District 9.

SWAISGOOD, BROWN FIRST-TEAM ALL-TRAC



MATTHEW HORN/THE NEWS-MESSENGER

Dalton Welty of Fremont Ross was honorable mention all-TRAC.

STAFF REPORT

Fremont Ross junior shortstop Chloe Swaisgood and senior first baseman Trevor Brown were recognized first-team all-Three Rivers Athletic Conference for softball and baseball, respectively.

Shortstop Grant Gallagher was second-team and Dalton Welty, Jack White and Noah Hotz were honorable mention for the Little Giants. Morgan Englund, Chloe Roosen and Gabby Zuniga were also honorable mention.

Jay Denman was player of the year and Tim Gerken coach of the year for Toledo St. Francis deSales. Findlay's Chandler Stillings was pitcher of the year.

Haley Dominique was player of the year and Branda Rada-baugh coach of the year for Clay. Amanda Combs was pitcher of the year for Toledo Whitmer.



MOLLY CORFMAN/THE NEWS-MESSENGER

Chloe Swaisgood of Fremont Ross was recognized first-team all-TRAC.