

Ross Eliminated From Tournament

Little Giants beaten in tournament Saturday

TIFFIN — Fremont Ross' bid for a third consecutive regional softball appearance was snuffed out Saturday by an Ashland pitcher who threw 15 strikeouts.

The Little Giants scored once in the sixth but lost 2-1 to the Arrows behind Ashland's Janet Derr's hard throwing in the Division I District Final played at Tiffin Columbian. Ross had reached the regional tournament the past two seasons.

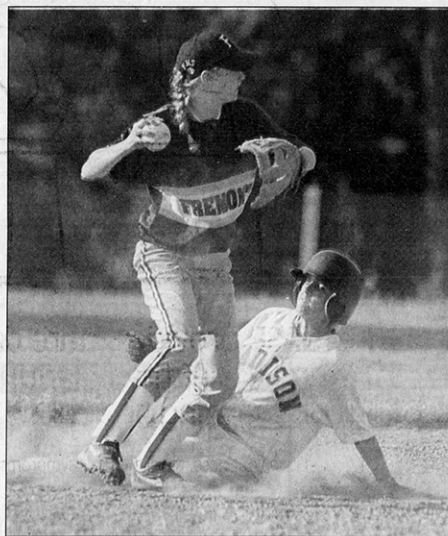
"It's just humbling when you have 15 strikeouts," Ross coach Cheryl Schell said. "She just shut our offense down."

The Arrows (16-4) scored once in the first and once in the third off Little Giant pitcher Jodi Kusmer, who lost for the first time after 11 wins.

Chaar Horn tripled, and Dawn Zerman and Jodi Fick each singled for Ross's three hits.

While out of the state tournament, the Little Giants can still win a share of the Great Lakes League championship with victories this week. They host Toledo Whitmer Tuesday and Sylvania Northview Thursday, needing wins against both to get a piece of the league title.

Little Giants in district final



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison
EMILY DOWELL of Fremont Ross looks to throw to first after forcing out Mansfield Madison's Crystal Woogener at second base in the Little Giants' 4-1 win. Ross plays Ashland Friday in the district final at Tiffin Columbian.

Softball team will play Ashland Friday

By BRIAN SPIESS
Sports editor

TIFFIN — Fremont Ross got run-producing hits from the middle of the order Tuesday and eliminated Mansfield Madison 4-1 in the Division I District Tournament.

But the Little Giants may not have said goodbye to Ross coach Mike Leeper.

"When (Fremont Ross) plays Ashland ... I'd like to see that game," Leeper said of Friday's 6 p.m. district championship at Tiffin Columbian.

He has seen both. Twice this season his Madison team played Ashland, splitting the Ohio Heartland Conference matchups. And Tuesday, Leeper's team scored just once despite having base runners in every inning.

"We didn't have the timely hitting that we needed," he said.

But Fremont did, scoring three runs in the decisive third inning.

With Michele Smith on second base and Nicki Peltrey on first, senior Casey Schepflin hit a base hit to right-center field. "I got a pitch outside," Schepflin, the Little Giants' fourth-

Tuesday's District Semifinal
Ross 4
Madison 1

Friday's District Final
Ross vs. Ashland at Tiffin Columbian.
6 p.m.

place hitter, said after the game. "I like outside pitches and I finally got the one I wanted."

On Schepflin's RBI single, Peltrey advanced to third and Schepflin took second on an unsuccessful throw home to get Smith.

One batter later, sixth-hitter Kylee Schneider hit a high shot to left center which fell between the right fielder and center fielder. Peltrey and Schepflin scored and Schneider was thrown out trying for a double.

"I had coach Schell inside my head, saying 'Kylee get a hit, you've got to get a hit, it won't work if you don't get a hit,'" Schneider said.

"We're already, as far as innings go," Ross coach Cheryl Schell said. "We never know who's going to start us. It takes the pressure off every individual batter when everybody is hitting behind you."

Ross would add another run in the sixth, when Dawn Zerman doubled and scored on a wild pitch and error.

Meanwhile, Ross pitcher Jodi Kusmer was keeping Madison away from home plate. She allowed seven hits in the complete game win, which came one day after she threw a no-hitter in a 7-0 win against Oregon Clay.

"She's doing a great job," Schell said. "She's proven herself to be our pitcher."

Leeper said that Kusmer had help from an impressive defense.

"And when you play good defense, you can go a long way," he said.

"That defense is part of the reason Leeper anticipates a good game against Ashland. If his scouting report on the Arrows is accurate, the Little Giants will not be able to afford many defensive breakdowns.

"Ashland hits the ball. They hit the ball like fiends," Leeper said of the Arrows, who beat Defiance Monday. "They've got power and they don't strike out."