

Baseball springs up

By **MATTHEW HORN**
Sports Writer

Fremont Ross went 8-2 to win the Greater Buckeye Conference in Andy Dennings first season at the helm last year.

The Little Giants had not won the league in 20 years.

And he and the boys intend to keep things going in the same direction.

"The goal every year is to win the league title," Dennings said. "I think last year the kids layed a nice foundation that was building even before I got here. Hopefully the kids expect to win it every year."

Ross was 17-7 overall last year. It lost to Marion Harding in the sectional finals.

This year's No. 1 starter Mike Abbott said the GBC was the highlight last season as the team did not meet its own expectations in the tournament.

"We want to keep it going so we can build the program and people will know who (the Little Giants) are," Abbott said.

Ross will return seniors Aaron Opelt (outfield), Kyle Cook (shortstop), Abbott (second base, pitcher), Robbie Hall (outfield), Billy Boukissen (catcher) and Kory Decker (first base, pitcher). Junior outfielder and pitcher Paul Hershey also saw action last year.

Brad Cobb graduated after going 4-2 with a .409 average.

Opelt is one of the better outfielders in the state of Ohio. He can cover a ton of ground to instill confidence in the pitching staff and will again bat third.

"We work on defense a lot," Abbott said. "I just pitch and let them field it."

Dennings believe Boukissen, Cook, Abbott and Opelt will provide a formidable defense up the middle.

"It's a major asset," Dennings said. "You always want to be strong up the middle.

"(Opelt) is the quarterback in the outfield."

Abbott will bat in front of Opelt while Cook will follow.

"You can't pitch around him," Dennings said.

Abbott said Ross can manufacture runs or pound them out.

We're hoping we can slug it out but coach will have us manufacture runs," he said. "We'll bunt but we should have a pretty good hitting season compared to last year. We didn't hit as well as we thought we would."

Dennings said Abbott knows how to sequence his pitches and think ahead.

"Mike has a purpose for every pitch," Dennings said. "He's a competitor but he doesn't show that emotion when he's out there on the mound."

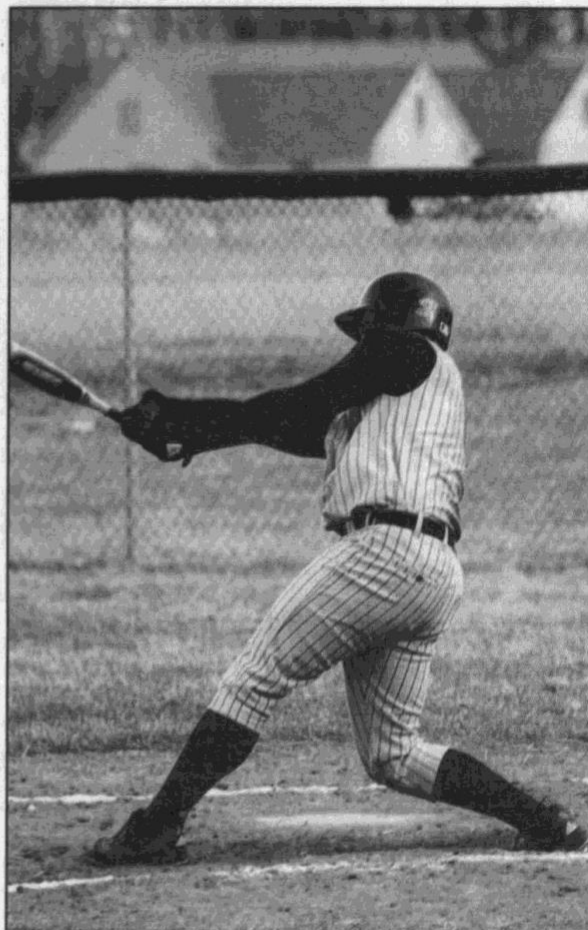
The Little Giants should benefit from their depth in a GBC race that could be relatively wide open.

"One of our strengths I believe will be depth," Dennings said. "I have 14 kids that can contribute in many ways.

"We should be strong offensively and defensively."

Dennings said he has several options on the mound — all with potential — but the staff may experience some growing pains.

"The pitching needs to develop," Dennings said. "The pitch-



News-Messenger/Doug Hise

GIBSONBURG'S Alex Black hits a 3-run home run in the first inning of Monday's 10-0 victory as area baseball got under way with a bang.

ers will have to mature at the varsity level."

Dennings said he is hoping for solid seasons from Ryan Otney and Cory Hull on the hill.

"They need to have solid years on the mound," Dennings said. "And Decker, too."

Abbott said Hull improved over the summer.

"He's going to play a big role I think," Abbott said.

Decker had an outstanding sophomore season before

struggling a bit on the mound as a junior.

"He's an important piece to the puzzle," Dennings said. "He's looked good so far. He made some adjustments."

Dennings would love to repeat as GBC champs before a more extended postseason run.

"(Winning the league) was a nice accomplishment," he said. "It's something we haven't done in a while. It was nice to see the kids hard work pay off with a title."

Little Giants open season with win

Ross reels off five runs in sixth inning

By KYLE TIMMONS
News-Messenger correspondent

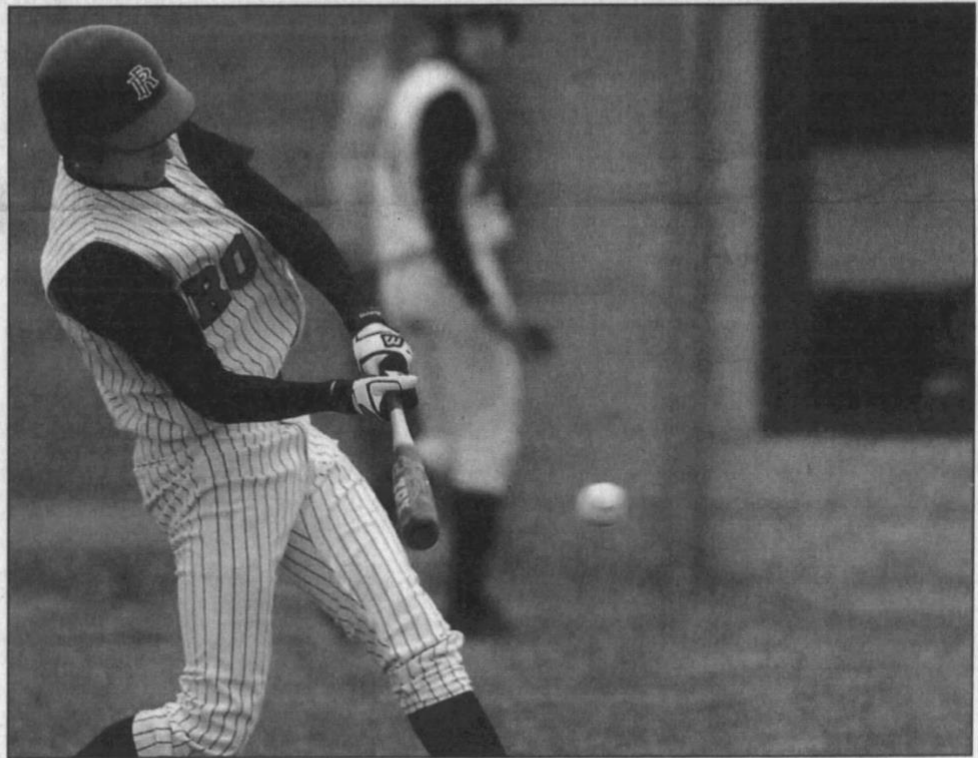
After a shaky start to Tuesday's chilly baseball game between Fremont Ross and Delta, senior pitcher Mike Abbott warmed things up by shutting down Delta's offense over the final 6 1/3 innings en route to an 8-1 season-opening win.

Delta's lead-off batter, Mike Dickerson drew a walk after falling behind 0-2 in the count and worked his way around the bases on a stolen base and an error and eventually scored on a two-out single by Aaron Walter to give Delta a 1-0 advantage.

"Give the credit to (Delta)," Fremont coach Andy Dennings said. "They had some situations where they took advantage of some things.

"We had a little error here, a walk there and their kids worked the count very well. (Abbott) had a little trouble finding the zone and they were smart enough to be selective."

But that was the end to the Panthers' offense, as Abbott settled down and waited for the Ross bats to



News-Messenger/Charlie Longton

FREMONT ROSS'S PAUL Hershey hits against Delta during Tuesday's season opener. The Little Giants won.

respond.

"We knew that we were coming to play a really good team," said Delta coach Jay LeFevre. "Their pitcher (Abbott) isn't over-

powering but he's very effective and he settled down a little bit and located his pitches well."

Delta pitcher Erick Vaughan had other things

on his mind as he retired the first seven batters of a dangerous Little Giant offense.

With one out in the bottom of the third, junior

Ryan Ottney earned a walk to give Ross its first base runner only to be thrown

See ROSS, B2

Ross beats Delta in opener

Continued From B1

out trying to steal second base moments later.

Kirt Munson then got things going as he got to first base on an infield error by the Panthers.

Paul Hershey followed with the Little Giants' first base hit of the season and Fremont was in business as Abbott came to the plate looking to help his pitching performance out from the offensive side of the plate.

Abbott lined a 2-2 pitch for a single and Munson tied the game at 1-1.

"At the start we hit a couple of shots well," Dennings said. "We just couldn't find any holes. Then it all started to click once we got some runners on and put a little bit of pressure on them."

Senior Aaron Opelt followed Abbott's hit with a single of his own, driving in two more Little Giant runs as they took a 3-1 lead after three innings.

Abbott finished the final four innings by setting down 11 straight Panthers and

12 out of the final 13 batters. For the game, Abbott struck out eight and only gave up three hits.

"(Abbott) had a long first inning," said Dennings. "His pitch count was way down for the last six innings and he really did a nice job once he found his release point and found his zone."

Ross would score the remainder of their eight runs in the sixth inning.

Senior Kyle Cook, Billy Boukissen and Paul Hershey each walked during the five-run inning while Robbie Hall, Kory Decker, Munson and Abbott each singled.

Decker's single drove in two runs, while Munson's and Abbott's hits also accounted for one run each.

"The bases were loaded so I was just looking to get a runner in," Decker said. "I was trying to put the ball in play and I found a hole."

Ottney accounted for the other run as he drove in Boukissen on a groundout to third base.

The Little Giants (1-0) will travel to Milan today to take on Edison.

Hull's three-hitter gives Ross win

News-Messenger reports

Cory Hull threw seven strong innings Wednesday night for Fremont Ross as the Little Giants won their second consecutive game, beating Edison 7-1.

"(Hull) threw the ball extremely well," Fremont coach Andy Dennings said of Hull's three-hitter. "He was around the plate all night."

The Little Giants (2-0) scored runs in five of their seven innings.

For the second consecutive game, several different players contributed to Fremont's success with the bats.

Kyle Cook went 3-for-3 with a double and a run batted in to lead the Little Giant attack.

Kirt Munson, Aaron Opelt (1 RBI), and Paul Hershey (double, 2 RBI) each finished 2-for-2.

Munson had three stolen bases and two runs scored.

Kory Decker also added a double and Mike Abbott a single for Fremont.

The Little Giants will travel to Sandusky to play Perkins this afternoon.

out 13 as the Wildcats beat Fostoria St. Wendelin out of conference.

Carl Smith went 3-for-3 with a triple, knocking in four runs. Josh Zollinger went 3-of-4 and scored three times.

Softball

Milleson blanks Fliers

Miranda Milleson gave up two hits, shutting out Clyde for a 3-0 win Wednesday.

Liz Drown took the loss for the Fliers, giving up four hits and five walks in 4½ innings.

Ashley Kern doubled for Clyde, while Alaina Haubert had two hits for the Golden Bears.

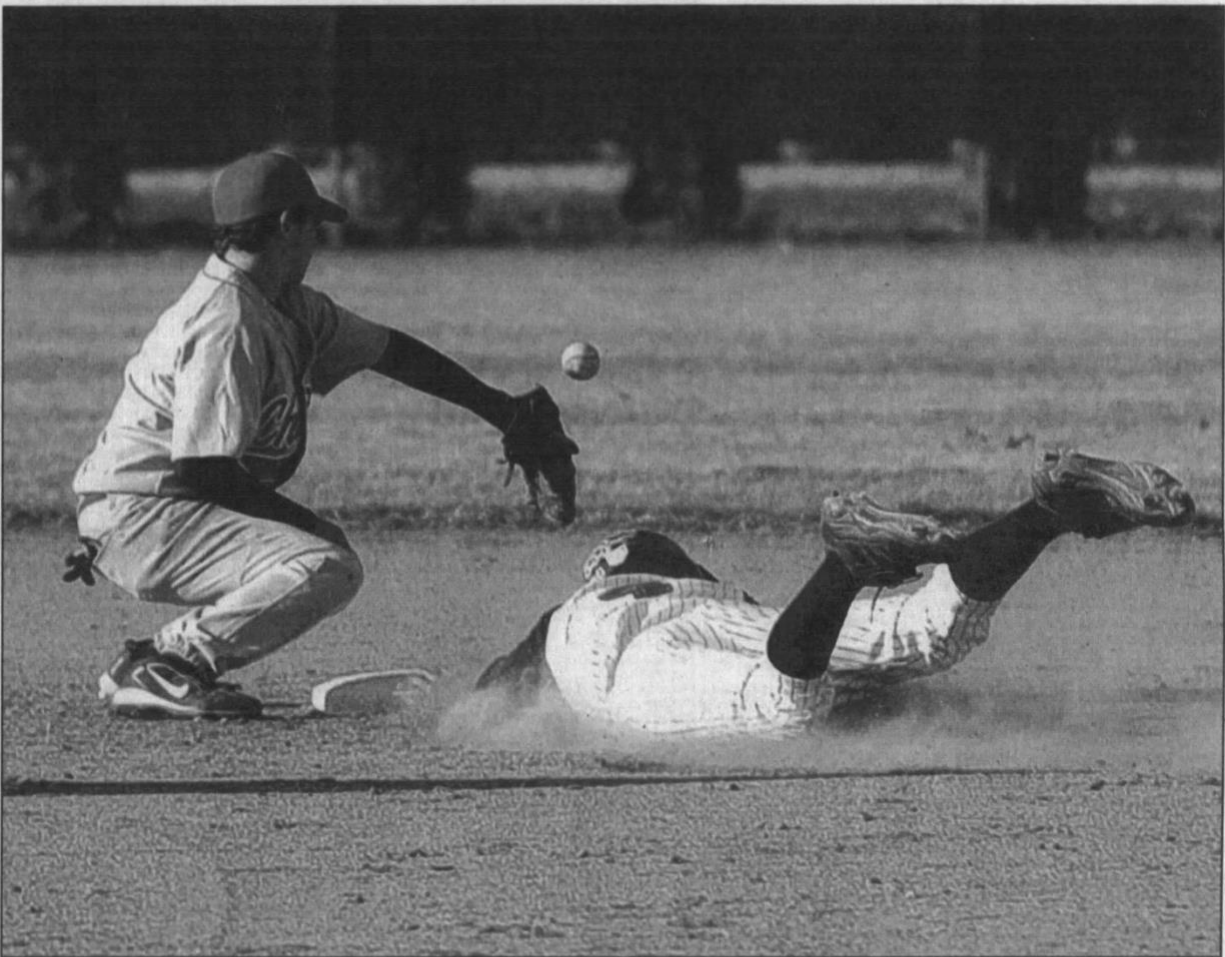
Tennis

Rockets beat Rossford

Both Oak Harbor doubles teams beat Rossford, carrying the day for the Rockets, who won their season opener, 3-2.

Adam Schumaker won in third singles, over Jack Knakowski 6-1, 7-5. Mike Hawthorn and Devin Frank beat Zach

BASEBALL: FREMONT ROSS 11, BEDFORD ST. PETER CHANEL 1 (5 INNINGS)



News-Messenger/Charlie Longton

FREMONT ROSS'S MIKE Abbott slides into second during Friday's game against Bedford St. Peter Chanel. Ross won, 11-1.

Wind blows Little Giants past Cardinals

By KYLE TIMMONS
News-Messenger correspondent

The weather at Alumni Field on Friday provided some fortunate breaks for the Fremont Ross baseball team as the wind played numerous tricks on Bedford St. Peter Chanel's defense boosting the Little Giants to an 11-1 victory in five innings.

A two-out third-inning rally broke the game open, as Ross scored eight runs. Eight different players picked up base hits and seven different players tallied RBI.

Senior Aaron Opelt led off with a single to center field, Bedford pitcher Bill Gura seemed to get un-

der control, setting the next two Fremont batters on strikes.

With two outs, junior Ryan Ottney singled home Opelt to spread the Little Giants' lead to 4-1.

Then the wind wreaked havoc as an Aaron Hinkle fly ball to center field was misplayed, and Ottney came around to score.

"We haven't had wind like this all year," said Cardinal coach Charles Salata. "So far we've had cold back in Cleveland and some 32 degree days, but we've certainly haven't had anything like this."

Trent Logan then used the breezy conditions to drop an 0-2

pitch into right-centerfield, bringing Hinkle home.

"Both at bats (Logan) got a little bit behind," said Ross coach Andy Dennings. "He had two great at-bats."

"He kept his hands inside the baseball and drove them to the opposite field. Those are wonderful at bats with two strikes on him."

Pitcher Kory Decker followed by doubling to the gap in left-center field to give Fremont (3-1) an 8-1 advantage as Logan scored his second run of the game.

The two-out onslaught continued, with Paul Hershey picking up

his second hit of the game as the Cardinals' first and second basemen struggled to pick up the direction of the ball in the wind.

Hershey was 2-for-2 with a double and two RBI.

Senior Mike Abbott drove in another run on his second double of the game, bringing in Hershey before coming home himself as Opelt finished the scoring attack for the Little Giants on a double that found its way to the outfield as Bedford's left-fielder struggled with the weather conditions.

See WIND, B2

Wind blows favorably for Ross

Continued From B1

"Our outfielders should have been able to adjust," Salata said. "Certainly Fremont adjusted and they caught the fly balls that we hit out there. We should have been able to at least adjust and catch the fly balls."

Logan credit his teammates' abilities as they were able to manage the wind.

"We have great outfielders," said Logan. "You've got to give it to them. The outfielders and infielders played great defense and they played the wind out there very well on the fly balls."

Abbott was 2-of-3 batting and scored twice.

"We benefited from them struggling a little in the outfield," Dennings said. "They had a little problem picking the ball up and problems tracking the ball with the wind."

"Sometimes you get those breaks and you just have to make sure you take advantage of it."

With an 11-1 advantage, Decker, who allowed Bedford's only run in the first inning on four walks, settled down and struck out four Cardinal batters to close

the game.

"I'm pretty pleased," Dennings said. "We had a lot of mental errors last night and we cut a lot of those down tonight."

"We played well defensively and after the first couple of innings I thought our bats woke up. We started to become a little more aggressive."

Decker only gave up one hit, in the second inning, and struck out eight batters while walking seven.

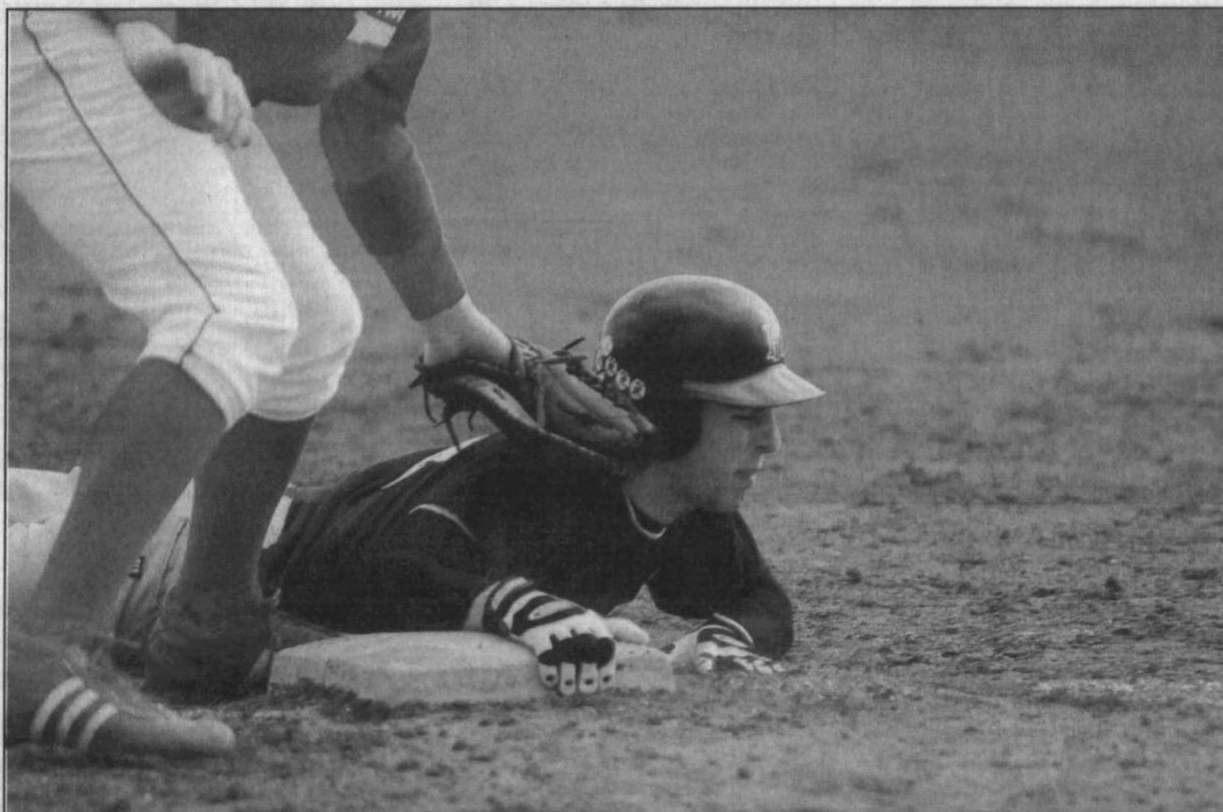
"Once Decker settled down a little bit and got through that first inning he really threw the ball really well," Dennings said. "I'm very pleased and I think (Decker) is really excited about it as well."

Hinkle and Logan each scored a run in the second inning to give Fremont a 3-1 lead while senior Kyle Cook drove home the Little Giants' first run of the game on a two-out double.

Cook finished 2-for-3 with two RBI.

"It was good to see the real Little Giants back," Logan said after his 2-for-3 performance. "I was real happy with the way we performed tonight."

"The hitting came around and we made a lot more plays than we did last night."



News-Messenger/Polly Ann Bauman

BILLY BOUKISSEN of Fremont Ross slides into second base as Port Clinton's Joey Malfara guards the bag. Boukissen was picked off, and the Little Giants ultimately lost, 5-3.

Ross falls to Port Clinton

By **VINCE GUERRIERI**
Sports Editor

PORT CLINTON — The Redskins were the latest team to take advantage of Fremont Ross's light hitting.

Cody Salyers pitched five innings without giving up a hit as Port Clinton played small ball to break open a tie in the sixth, going on to win 5-3 in a non-conference matchup between two teams with big expectations this season.

The Redskins remain undefeated at 5-0, while the Little Giants,

who went 17-7 last year, including 8-2 to win the Greater Buckeye Conference, are now at 3-2.

"We're just not hitting the baseball well," said Ross coach Andy Dennings. "It's just that simple."

Port Clinton, on the other hand, looked every inch like a team that won 22 games, its first Sandusky Bay Conference title since 1987 and a district championship. Salyers allowed just four baserunners through five innings, and Logan Meisler continued his hot hitting,

going 2-for-3 with a run and an RBI.

"He's been hot all year," said Redskins coach Tracy Bodi. "We were able to manufacture some runs."

Meisler said he was trying to hit line drives on the blustery day.

"If you hit the balls in the air, the wind plays with them," he said.

Meisler led off the bottom of the third inning with one of his line drive singles — against Cody Bishoff, who relieved starter Mike Abbott and ultimately took the loss. Dennings pulled Abbott to rest him

for the Little Giants' conference opener Friday at Lima.

Meisler stole second, and Joey Timmons hit a single, scoring Meisler. Timmons got caught in a rundown on a steal attempt.

Josh Wierzbza drew a walk, as did Kyle Gonya. Kyle Millinger slapped a single to score Wierzbza and Gonya.

Ross battled back in the sixth, as leadoff hitter Paul Hershey hit a

See **ROSS, C3**

Ross falls to Port Clinton

Continued From C1

single to right field. Mike Abbott fouled out, and Salyers hit Aaron Opelt — the last batter he faced.

Joey Malfara came on in relief, and gave up an RBI double to Kyle Cook before striking out Robbie Hall looking.

Ryan Ottney stroked a grounder to third that was muffed as Opelt scored. The throw home was long and Cook scored, tying the game at 3.

"We had one burp there," Bodi said. "That just happens."

In the top of the seventh, Mal-

fara put men on first and second and was lifted as Opelt came up to bat. Malfara ultimately got the win for the Redskins.

Wierzba came in, pitching for the first time since he was a freshman. The senior walked Opelt to load the bases, and Cook hit a fielder's choice, catching Hershey out at the plate. Wierzba fanned Robbie Hall to end the game with the bases loaded.

"It felt good," the senior said of taking the mound for the first time in three years. "I was able to get the last two hitters out with some defense."

Dennings could only shake his head at the outcome of the game.

"I thought we missed some opportunities," he said. "We came out flat."

However, he was happy to see the Little Giants rally in the sixth.

Bodi was also pleased with the sixth inning.

"We answered in the next inning, which I think is a key sign of a veteran team," he said.

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HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL: FREMONT ROSS 8, BOWLING GREEN 6

Little Giants slug way to win against Bobcats

Boukissen, Opelt, Hall, Cook, Logan each homered for Ross

By MATT ENTRUP
News-Messenger correspondent

BOWLING GREEN — It turned out to be a battle of David versus Goliath when Fremont Ross squared off against Bowling Green on Thursday.

The Little Giants provided the brute force with five home runs from five different players, while the Bobcats played the role of the scrapper, using sacrifice bunts and opportunistic base running to stay in the game.

Bowling Green led most of the game but Goliath ultimately triumphed, as Ross eventually battered

the Bobcats into submission, winning 8-6.

BG coach Doug Merrill wasn't the least bit surprised by the offensive show the Little Giants put on.

"We thought that (Fremont Ross) might be the best offensive team that we see all year. It's a good hitting team. I mean, you can't constantly throw curve balls and change-ups, you've gotta throw a fast ball at some point and when we did they hit it over the fence," he said.

Ross was not quick out of the gate though. Trouble with walks and errors allowed BG to gain the early lead.

"Walks put pressure on each team and when you start putting pressure on a team there's a lot more things to think about and sure enough, then the errors happen," said Little

Giants coach Andy Denning.

In the first inning a lead-off double by starting pitcher Jeremiah Kollar and a bunt single gave the Bobcats runners at the corners with no outs. Three walks later, they had their first runs of the game.

Ross was lucky to escape the inning giving up only two runs when a diving catch by rightfielder Paul Hershey caught a BG base runner off guard and he forgot to tag up at third. After copious prodding from the bleachers they tagged the base for the third out.

In the second, Ross catcher Billy Boukissen belted the first of Ross's home runs with a solo shot to left field that was the only run in the inning for them.

In the bottom of the inning another walk put BG's leadoff hitter on first and another sacrifice bunt immedi-

ately moved him into scoring position. A walk set up a potential Ross double play but when they failed to turn two a run scored, giving BG back its two run lead.

Both teams failed to score in the third but Ross got back into action in the fourth when centerfielder Aaron Opelt homered and shortstop Kyle Cook scored from third on a Boukissen groundout, tying the score at 3.

Ross gave both runs back in the bottom of the inning, however. First, Hershey lost a fly ball in the sun prompting him to take the sunglasses from their perch on his cap's bill and put them to use. A sacrifice bunt advanced the runner and a walk gave the Bobcats runners on first and second. Hershey was tested again in the inning, this time making the catch and nearly picking off the tagging run-

ner on his way to third.

A dribbler back to the pitcher looked like it would end the inning but starting pitcher Kory Decker overthrew the bag and two runners scored.

In the fifth, Ross leftfielder Robbie Hall joined in the scoring and brought his team to within one on a solo shot to left, the Little Giants' only run of the inning.

Relief pitcher Cory Hull held BG scoreless in the bottom frame and two more Ross players decided to join the home run parade in the sixth.

A two-run homer by Cook gave the Little Giants their first lead of the game.

"I was just trying to hit the ball on the ground, or up in the air for a fly ball so (the runner on third) could tag up and score because we were only down one. I just got a pitch and got a

little bit of it," he said.

Later in the inning DH Trent Logan added what would be the game winning home run. The hard line drive almost didn't make it over, skipping off the top of the left field wall.

"It didn't feel like a home run, I hadn't hit one in high school yet and I got to first base and coach was telling me, 'Get on your horse,' so I was running as hard as I could trying to get a double or a triple out of it, and then when it went over I was just relieved," he said.

BG tried to give Ross a taste of their own medicine with a Jason Cress dinger in the sixth but one run was all they could muster.

Ross added another run in the seventh to bring the final score to 8-6.

Hull earned the win giving up one run, three hits and one walk in three innings.

Ross begins league season with win over Lima

Mike Abbott pitched a complete game and Aaron Opelt homered as Ross started its conference season with a win, beating Lima 5-2.

The Little Giants broke open a 2-2 tie in the sixth inning, as the bats started to come alive for Ross.

"We started to play with a little emotion and good things happened for us," said coach Andy Dennings.

Ross makes most of Huron errors

BY KYLE TIMMONS

News-Messenger correspondent

To say the Fremont Ross baseball team was opportunistic Saturday would be an understatement.

The Little Giants took advantage of a younger and deflated Huron lineup and several key errors as they took both games of a double header, 13-11 and 10-0.

The opening contest was a battle of the last man standing.

Huron jumped to a 2-0 lead in the top half of the first inning.

With two out in the bottom half of the frame, senior Aaron Opelt was hit by a pitch and Kyle Cook reached base on an error by Huron.

Then, with a 2-0 pitch, Robbie Hall tattooed a home run to left center field, roughly 360 feet, as the Little Giants took a 3-2 lead.

"I've been struggling mostly hitting the ball," said Hall. "I finally got in the groove today."

But Fremont pitcher Cody Bischoff couldn't hold the lead as the Tigers responded with six runs in the second inning on five hits, two errors and a walk.

Bischoff pitched just two innings giving up eight runs.

"We really dug ourselves a whole," said Fremont coach Andy Dennings. "The errors and walks really hurt us and they took advantage of the situation

See ROSS, B2

Ross sweeps Huron in twin bill

Continued From B1

and put us behind the eight ball there for a little while."

Fremont tallied another run in the third inning as Opelt led the inning off with a double to right center field and later scored with two outs as Trent Logan singled to center.

Facing a 10-4 deficit, Fremont's bats rose to occasion in the bottom half of the fifth.

Cook opened with a single to center and Hall was then hit by a pitch.

Logan popped out to first and then Tiger pitcher Kevin Howard fell apart.

Kory Decker walked to load the bases and junior With two strikes, pinch-hitter Ottney singled to right field, driving in two runs.

After two more Little Giant runs, Opelt came up with two runners on, his team down two.

Opelt then crushed a home run over the right field fence to give Ross an 11-10 advantage, his third home run in three days.

"I kind of started off a little slow this year," Opelt said. "But I'm starting to hit the ball well and I'm hitting it hard."

Decker and Ottney provided two insurance runs in the sixth inning on sacrifices as Fremont held on for a 13-11 victory.

In the second game, Fremont improved to 7-2 making quick work of the Tigers in five innings.

After walking the first batter, Ottney retired the next three Tigers on strikeouts setting the stage for his two hit shut-out.

The Little Giants then took advantage of a series of errors and walks in a six-run first inning.

Senior Mike Abbott reached first with

one out on an error by the Tigers' third baseman and stole second base.

Opelt followed with a walk, bringing up Cook. Cook smacked the ball to deep right field and the Huron right fielder dropped the ball, battling with the fence as Abbott came home.

Hall doubled to right center field, driving in Opelt and Cook and giving Ross a 3-0 lead.

Billy Boukissen and Logan then loaded the bases on back-to-back walks before eventually coming home on two more errors by Huron in the opening frame.

Fremont's bats continued to dominate in the second as Cook smacked another single and Hall added another double.

Cook eventually scored for the second time in two innings on a sacrifice fly by Logan.

Logan was 1-of-1 batting in the second game as he doubled, walked, batted in a run and scored twice.

Ottney and the Little Giant defense continued to retire the Tigers' lineup, giving Fremont the opportunity to close the game after five innings.

"He got off to a little bit of a rough start," Dennings said. "Once he settled down a little bit and started to realize that we had a lead, and there is no point in making perfect pitches, and just throw strikes and let our defense do the work, he did a nice job."

After Boukissen fought his way to a walk to open the bottom of the fourth, Logan banged a double to left field.

Both Boukissen and Logan would come around later in the inning to secure the 10-0 win.

"We've been struggling lately in our opening innings," Hall said. "We did what we needed to to get 10 runs and get out of here in 5 innings."

HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL: ROSS 3, MARION HARDING 3, 5 INNINGS

Little Giants romp in league win

Opelt homers,
drives in four,
scores three
times in five
innings

By **MATTHEW HORN**
Sports Writer

Fremont Ross's Aaron Opelt has developed quite a reputation around the Greater Buckeye Conference.

Opelt drove in four runs including a 360-foot two-run home run to the opposite field and pitcher Mike Abbott went the distance, giving up no earned runs, four hits and no walks, as the Little Giants defeated Marion Harding 13-3 in the Greater Buckeye Conference on Tuesday.

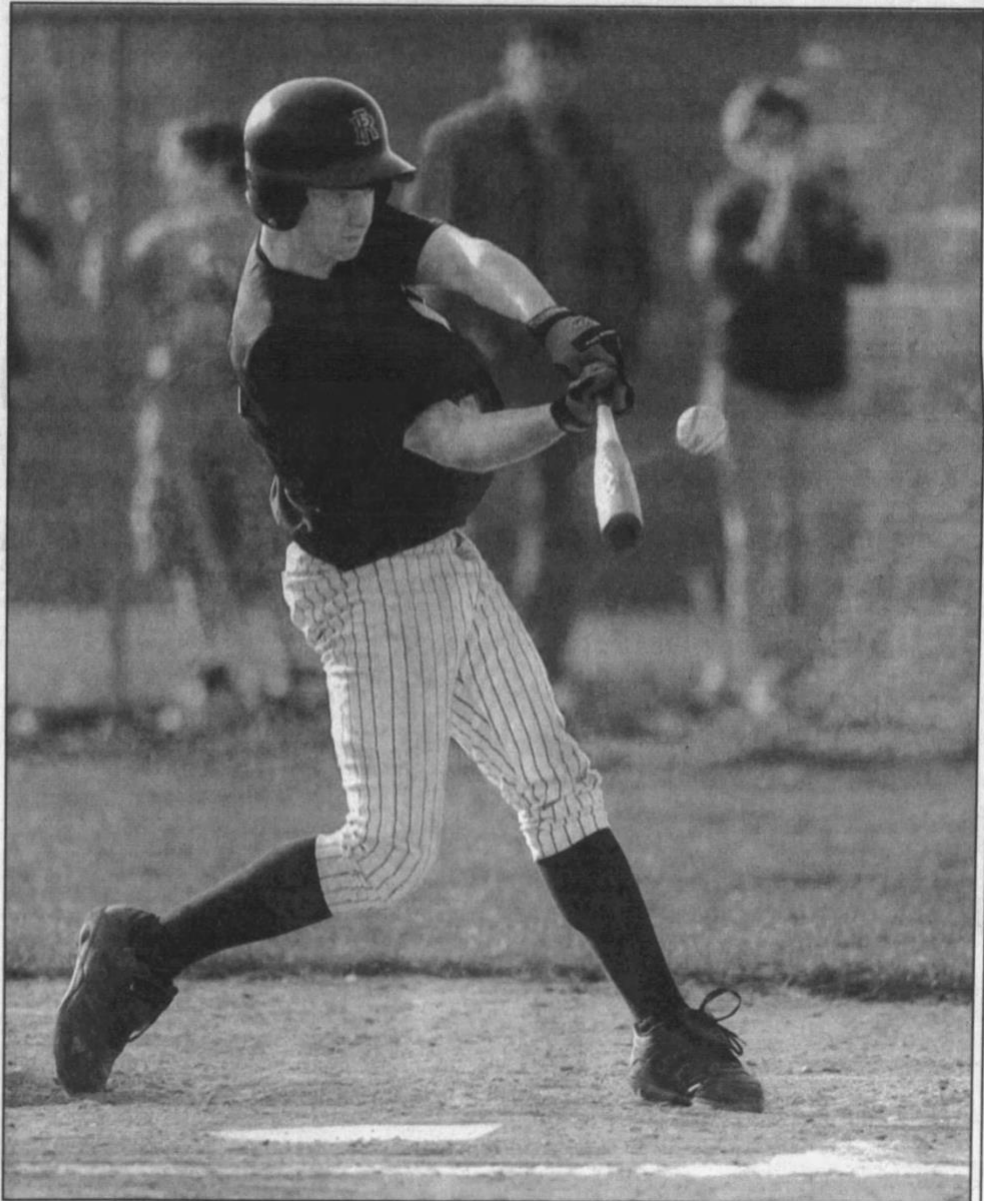
"He's an outstanding athlete," said Marion Harding coach Mike Pace of Opelt. "I'd love to have a dozen on my team. His size. He almost looks like a man among boys. I didn't realize how big he is until I walked by him after game."

Opelt said his approach and mindset is altered with runners on base.

"With runners on I just want to hit it hard," he said. "With less than two outs I want to get it deep to get the run in. Abbott and Paul are getting on base ahead of me."

While not comparing Tuesday's victory to a playoff outing, Opelt said the win still loomed large — particularly after the Presidents knocked the Little Giants out of the playoffs last year.

"It's a big win," he said. "They got us in the game that counted last year. If we see them again at that point we need to play like we did (Tuesday)."



News-Messenger/Charlie Longton

FREMONT'S MIKE ABBOTT hits the ball during Tuesday's game against Marion Harding. Abbott went the distance, taking the win for the Little Giants.

See **ROSS, C3**

Ross crushes Harding

Continued From C1

After starting the season 3-2, Ross has won the last five straight — including their first two conference games.

"It's big (to start strong in the GBC). When you have a lead in the GBC and you come out strong in the driver's seat — which is what you want — you set the pace for the year."

Ross won the GBC for the first time in 20 years last season.

Eight of the nine batters in the Little Giant lineup singled at least once as Ross appears to have emerged from a period of slumbering bats. Opelt singled twice in addition to the home run, Robbie Hall singled twice and doubled and Ryan Ottney singled and doubled.

"We seem to be swinging a lot better," said Ross coach Andy Dennings. "The pitch selection has improved. We're aggressive. I'm pleased with the development and we're doing what we're supposed to do in certain situations."

The team has wasted fewer at-bats with improved situational hitting, getting bunts down, moving runners or getting them in with less than two outs.

Abbott and Opelt each scored three runs, and Ryan Ottney and Aaron Hinkle each drove in two runs, and Paul Hershey scored two runs for Ross. Abbott — who simply throws strikes and lets the defense make plays — struck out only three in a typically efficient outing, although the Little Giants did make five errors behind him.

"We came out strong offensively and Mikey was great on the mound," Dennings said.

The Presidents began the contest with a run in the first inning but the Little Giants were able to take Marion Harding out of its aggressive baserunning game plan with six runs in the first three innings combined. Ten Ross hitters came to the plate in the fourth as Ross added five runs.

Ross shortstop Kyle Cook — who leads the team with 14 hits in 28 at-bats — drove in Abbott with a single in the third and ultimately scored on one by Ottney. Hershey was hit by a pitch to start the Ross fifth before Opelt singled with one out.

"Aaron's got some good cuts of late," Dennings said.

Hershey and Opelt executed a double steal as Hershey came home on the throw to second and Opelt was able to scamper to third on the subsequent throw home on a sequence Ross opponents are likely to see. Opelt scored on a double by Hall to end the game.

CJ Westler allowed 10 earned runs and 11 hits in four innings for Marion Harding. Jared Haas singled twice and scored two runs, Chris Crawford scored once and Austin Tanner singled to drive in one run.

Kirt Munson doubled and scored, and Trent Logan walked twice and scored a run behind the plate for the Little Giants.

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HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL: FREMONT ROSS 14, BELLEVUE 2 (5 INNINGS)

Ross topples Bellevue

By VINCE GUERRIERI
Sports Editor

Kory Decker was a little wild when he started Fremont Ross's baseball game Wednesday on the mound, walking three of the first four Bellevue batters he faced.

Decker got out of the inning without giving up a run or a hit and settled down, walking two and hitting two batters.

It's amazing what a 12-run cushion will do for a pitcher.

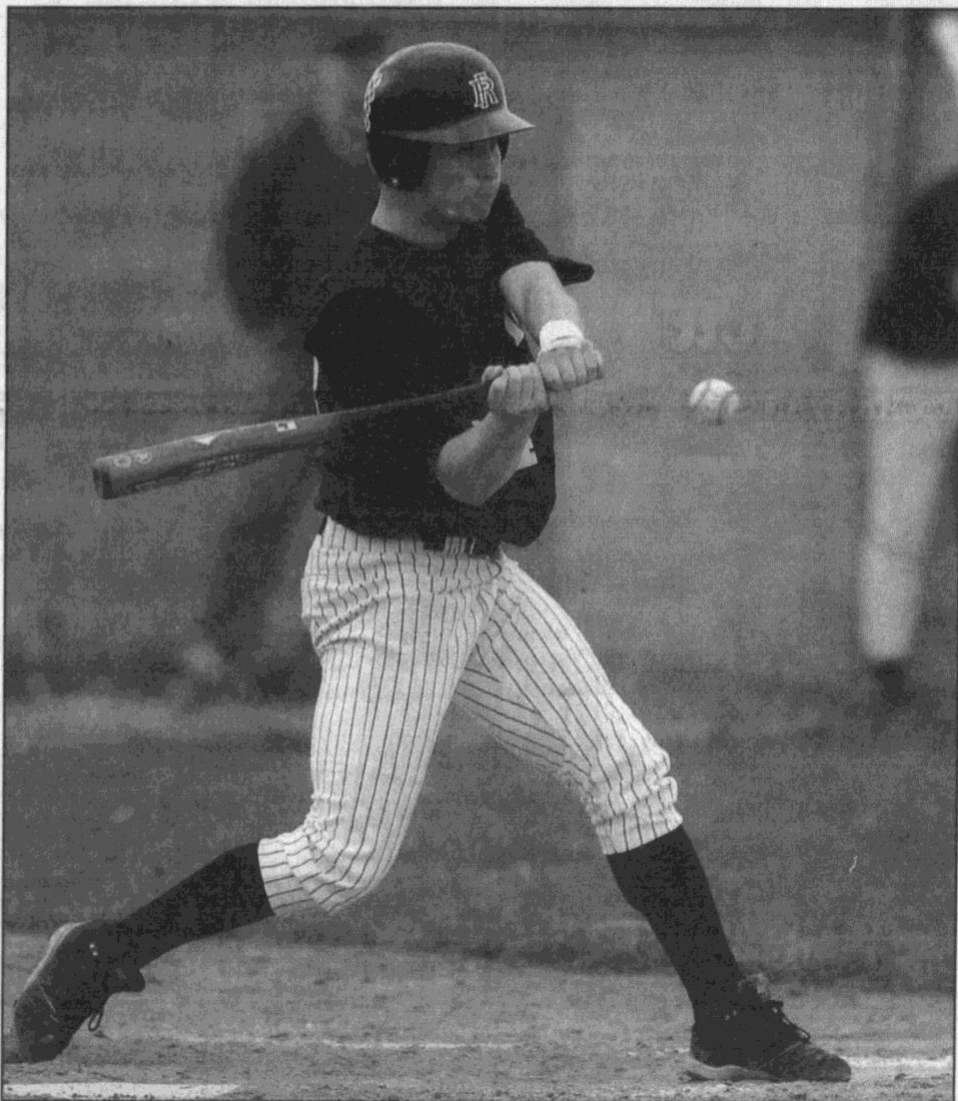
Ross nearly batted around twice in the first inning, running through two Redmen pitchers and staking Decker to a big early lead en route to a 14-2 five-inning rout.

"It's always nice to get out to a big lead," said Decker, now 2-1. "I just threw fastballs. I wanted them to put it into play."

For the Redmen (6-5), it was the third day of four straight with games, and the only non-conference matchup for them this week. If coach Todd Brown found any consolation in the loss, it's that it didn't affect their Northern Ohio League standing and gave some players more varsity experience.

"We got a lot of guys in," he said. "We got some guys some rest."

Cody Bischoff led off the first, subbing in for Paul Hershey in right field. Hershey hurt his shoulder when he landed on it diving for a David Foos fly ball in the first, and was pulled from the lineup.



News-Messenger/Charlie Longton

THE LITTLE GIANTS' Kyle Cook sees a pitch he likes in Wednesday's five-inning non-conference victory over Bellevue. Fremont Ross starting pitcher Kory Decker ran his record to 2-1.

See ROSS, B2

Ross tops Redmen in five

Continued from B1

Bischoff drew a leadoff walk from Cory Austin, and advanced to second when Austin hit Mike Abbott. Aaron Opelt fanned, and Kyle Cook reached first on an error, loading the bases. Austin walked Robbie Hall, bringing in Bischoff, and walked Trent Logan, bringing in Abbott.

"We've walked a few guys, but not like that," Brown said.

Ryan Ottney got the first hit of the game, a single that plated Cook. Decker walked, bringing in a run and Jared King hit a single, scoring Logan, before Austin was lifted in favor of Brad Joseph.

Austin faced nine batters, got one out, gave up two hits and was responsible for the first eight runs Ross scored.

"We came out strong, so that was good to see," Abbott said.

Initially, Joseph fared little better, giving up a single to Bischoff that cleared the bases. Abbott doubled and Opelt walked. Cook reached first on an error, and Hall doubled, bringing home a run. Logan knocked a sacrifice fly, bringing in the 12th and final run of the inning. Decker hit a chopper to short-stop Foos, who threw to Cody Dearth to end the inning and the carnage.

Brown said his team made too many mistakes while facing a good team that created their own opportunities.

"That's a bad combination for us," he said.

"It was just one of those things that just kind of snowballed."

— Ross coach Andy Dennings on the Little Giants' huge first inning

Ross coach Andy Dennings was pleased that the Little Giants were swinging the bats better than earlier this season, but knew there was some luck involved in the big inning.

"It was just one of those things that just kind of snowballed," he said.

Joseph was lifted in the second in favor of Chris Kath, who threw four solid innings for Bellevue, giving up two runs on five hits, but the Redmen couldn't get anything started offensively.

Brown said the team showed good patience in the batter's box.

"I know we didn't tear the cover off the ball, but we didn't swing at a lot of bad pitches," he said.

Ross tacked on two more runs in the second as King drew a leadoff walk, Bischoff doubled and Abbott hit an RBI fielder's choice. Opelt hit an RBI single before being taken out in a double play hit into by Cook.

The win is the sixth straight for the Little Giants, who seem to be hitting better as well.

"They're going to win a lot of ball-games," Brown said.

Little Giants split doubleheader

Hull looks good in mercy-rule win over Columbian

By KYLE TIMMONS
News-Messenger correspondent

It had been nine days since Fremont Ross pitcher Cory Hull had seen action from the mound.

But the length of time between appearances didn't bother him, as he recorded his third victory of the year to defeat Tiffin Columbian 15-5 on Saturday.

"It feels really good," Hull said of getting back to work. "I've been training all off season for it and, I just came back out here and did my job."

While Hull wasn't overpowering he did keep the Tornadoes' bats cooled down in the five-inning contest.

Columbian recorded the game's first run as senior Ben Huffman scored on an

error by Hull as he was trying to pick Huffman off third base in the first inning.

But Hull came back strong striking out junior Nick Montz to end the inning.

The Little Giants, 10-3 overall, were quick to answer their counterparts as Aaron Hinkle got things started by drawing a walk to open the bottom of the inning.

After a strike out from Columbian pitcher Aaron Hurd, Fremont began to get selective and rattle Hurd and his colleagues.

Senior Aaron Opelt rapped a single into left field and stole second base setting up Kyle Cook with runners at second and third.

Cook took a 2-2 pitch into right field, driving in both Hinkle and Opelt as the Little Giants were in business.

Junior Ryan Ottney would also serve up two RBI later in the inning as

he drove in teammates Trent Logan and Billy Boukissen, giving Fremont a 6-1 lead after one.

"Hurd is a sophomore, learning to pitch," Columbian coach Curt Mel-lott said. "Sometimes you have to learn in a tough way and he got a little

tough love out on the mound today. He's coming and trying but he needs to learn to pick up his target a little sooner."

The Little Giants forced Hurd to throw 50 pitches in the first inning as they brought 10 men to the plate.

From there, Hull just put things in cruise control, trying to get through the Tornado lineup.

"I've played Tiffin three times before and I expected them to come out and do their job," Hull said. "I just did my job a little better

Bats slumber in loss to Defiance

By KYLE TIMMONS
News-Messenger correspondent

Defiance pitcher Adam Wagner may not have been the hardest thrower on the mound Saturday but he sure was the hardest to hit as he held Fremont Ross's bats in check, defeating the Little Giants 10-2 at Alumni Field.

Wagner tossed 5½ innings giving up just two runs on four hits while striking out three Fremont batters.

"(Wagner) gave us another strong performance today," said Defiance coach Tom Held. "Usually good hitting teams are good fast-ball hitting teams."

"Adam's strength is that he has a really good change-up, especially for a sophomore."

Both teams had a quiet

first inning as Fremont pitcher Ryan Ottney retired the side in the top of the first, followed by Wagner returning the favor in the bottom half of the inning.

Ottney led the second inning off by walking Defiance's Corey Lamb on four straight pitches and then surrendered a single to Kane Wagner.

With two runners on, Ottney recorded two straight strikeouts before Nate Ripke singled home Lamb to give Defiance a 1-0 lead.

Wagner continued his strong performance on the mound as he sailed through the next four innings, giving up hits to Fremont's Trent Logan in the second inning, Aaron Opelt in the fourth and Robbie Hall in the fifth.

"I thought (Wagner) threw the ball extremely well," said Little Giant coach Andy Dennings. "He

had three pitches working. About the first three innings we couldn't get a bead on him, but after that we started to get some decent shots and hit the ball hard. We just couldn't find a hole."

While Ross was struggling with its bats, Defiance (9-2) took advantage of some crucial Little Giant errors and walks.

Ottney, who pitched the first four innings, allowed Defiance to tally four runs in the fourth following an infield error to lead off the inning. The main damage came from Defiance's left fielder, Andrew Sanchez, who drove in two runs on a two out single to left field.

Defiance also took advantage of three walks in the fifth inning, when Kory Decker came in and struggled, giving up three more runs.

See HULL, B2

See DEFIANCE, B2

Hull pitches well in victory

Continued From B1

than they did."

Fremont added two more runs in the second inning.

Mike Abbott drew a leadoff walk, stole second and was advanced to third on an Opelt sacrifice. Abbott then scored on a passed ball.

With two outs, Logan drove in Robbie Hall with a double, one of two on the day. Logan also finished with two RBI.

"I'm starting to get the ball in play a lot and I got a few RBIs today," Logan said. "I finally found some holes. I'm pretty pleased."

Fremont coach Andy Dennings complimented Logan's play.

"Trent has done a very good job in the five, six hole," Dennings said. "He puts the ball in play and is doing his job. That's why he's staying up there. He's doing what we expect of him in certain situations."

Columbian picked up four runs in the third inning as Jake Peacock and Brett Kneeskern opened with a double and triple. Huffman followed with a double of his own and eventually scored later in the inning, followed by a run by junior Josh Smith as Hull struggled a bit from

the mound.

"(Hull's) accuracy was a little off today," said catcher Logan. "He's usually one of our more accurate pitchers but he got the job done and that's what counts."

But the Little Giants responded positively answering with six runs of their own in the third inning.

Ottney tripled to right field to open the inning and Hull drove him in with a single.

After a Hinkle base hit, Abbott knocked in Hull and Hinkle, and scored himself on an RBI single by Opelt.

Opelt finished 3-3 with an RBI, two stolen bases and three runs scored while Ottney was 2-3 with a triple and one stolen base.

Cook finished with two hits and a run scored.

"(Opelt) hit the ball extremely well today," Dennings said. "(Cook) also started to get back on track."

But the day belonged to Hull who picked up his first varsity RBI and run scored while improving to 3-0 on the mound.

The Little Giants return to Greater Buckeye Conference play Tuesday, traveling to Findlay.

Defiance stills bats for win

Continued From B1

"When you play a good team like Fremont, and they make a mistake, you've got to try to make it hurt," Held said. "We were fortunate enough in this situation to get a couple of runs."

"Anytime you get a lead on a quality team like Ross, it works out in your advantage."

In the sixth inning, the Little Giants

tried to put together a rally trailing 8-0.

Cody Bischoff earned a one out walk and senior Mike Abbott followed with a single to left field.

Both Bischoff and Abbott eventually came around to score the lone runs for Fremont.

Abbott and Logan both finished 1-for-3 while Opelt and Hall were 1-for-2 with one walk apiece as the Little Giants fell to 9-3.

Ross perfect in GBC no more

By JOHN TURNER
News-Messenger correspondent

FINDLAY — The Little Giants went into Tuesday's contest with a perfect mark in Greater Buckeye Conference play, looking to make a struggling Findlay squad its next victim.

Instead, the relentless Trojans forced Ross to leave Findlay with a 12-8 loss, a tarnished record and a bruised ego.

Findlay was able to make the most of their 14 hits, scoring at least once in every inning. Jaren Stutzman set the pace for the Trojans, batting 4-for-5 in the leadoff slot with one triple and five RBIs. In the middle of the lineup, Ross was hurt again and again by Matt Sleasman, who went 3-for-4 with two doubles and four RBIs of his own.

Earning the win for Findlay (2-4, 1-1) was Sam Fruchey, who threw the final 2½ innings, allowing no earned runs to close out the game.

"The umpire had a tight zone, and Sam Fruchey was able to find the zone

and did a good job throwing strikes," said Findlay coach Jeff Stutzman.

Before Fruchey entered in the fifth, the Little Giants had rattled off eight runs in two innings to tie the game. Robbie Hall started things off in the fourth by reaching safely on a single, and was later driven home on a sacrifice fly by teammate Ryan Ottney. Six batters later the bases were full for Mike Abbott, who sent a rocket to the centerfield fence, clearing the bases and bringing Ross within striking distance.

After Findlay's Tim Voorhees scored off a Sleasman double, Ross (10-4, 2-1) was faced with a four-run deficit heading into the fifth. Then the bottom five players in the lineup for Ross came up huge, producing two hits, two walks and four runs to tie the game at eight.

"We started to get selective and took advantage of some walks," said Fremont Ross coach Andy Dennings.

"Later in the game we just kind of ran out of steam."

In the bottom half of the frame, Findlay went ahead for good, courtesy of a Stutzman triple down the right field line which scored Fruchey, who went 3-for-4 on the day to help his cause.

The Trojans added three insurance runs in the sixth, batting through the line-up and capitalizing on three walks with three hits.

"We never quit," Stutzman said. "We kept putting the bat on the ball and it was a great seven-inning ball game."

Ross used four different pitchers in the game, with Paul Hershey picking up the loss after 1½ innings of work. The team was forced to work from behind after spotting Findlay seven runs early, fighting through three untimely walks and two fielding errors.

"[There were] too many miscues by us," Dennings said. "They hit the ball pretty well but we absolutely did not play very well."



News-Messenger/Charlie Longton

THE LITTLE GIANTS' Ryan Ottney dives back to first base safely as Jon Davis awaits the throw Thursday.

Decker wins on mound

By KYLE TIMMONS
News-Messenger correspondent

Fremont Ross senior Kory Decker found his groove Thursday as the Little Giants pounded their way past Toledo Waite 14-4 in a non-league baseball game at Alumni Field.

Not only was Decker in a zone from the mound pitching all six innings of the Ross victory, he also singled twice and drove in three runs.

Decker (3-0) seemed to be in control early as he shut down the Indians in the first two innings surrendering one hit each frame.

"Decker had a great outing," said Little Giant coach Andy Dennings. "What a day. He had a great day. He did a nice job on the mound and hit the ball extremely well. He had a nice practice (Wednesday) and there was a little ride over into the game (Thursday)."

Billy Boukissen was the first batter for Ross in a role he was not familiar with. Boukissen, however, lined and 0-1 pitch to left field for a single.

"Start off the game with a hit," Boukissen said of his approach at the top of the lineup. "To come out and get a runner on base so I

can come around and score. That's exactly what I did."

Boukissen eventually scored despite a little indecision.

Boukissen stole second with one out before Aaron Opelt walked and Kyle Cook singled to right to load the bases. Robbie Hall came to the plate with the bases loaded and hit a fly ball to right. Boukissen thought twice about testing the arm of the Indians' right fielder and returned toward third base as Opelt was headed for the same destination thinking Boukissen would score.

Boukissen then decided to

try to score and scampered in safely as Waite's throw to third also failed to nab Opelt.

With the 1-0 lead Decker took the mound in the third inning and Waite's Mike White smacked a double down the left field line.

Decker then walked Howie Lacourse and Freddie Florez tied the game at 1-1 on an RBI single to right. Three batters later, the Indians found themselves with a 4-1 lead going into the bottom portion of the third inning.

See **BOUKISSEN**, C2

Boukissen leads off for Ross

Continued from B1

That's when the Ross bats broke loose.

With one out, Opelt drew his second walk and Cook followed with a walk of his own. Hall then ripped a 2-0 pitch to right field to drive in Opelt.

Trent Logan continued the Little Giant rally with a double to left to drive in Cook, and Hall and Logan eventually scored on a single by Ryan Ottney.

Ottney ended the five run blitz when he came around on Decker's first hit of the game.

"(Ross) has a really good ball club," said Waite coach Ken Rossler. "I've got to give them credit. They hit the ball and they hit the ball hard."

Ross added four more runs in the fourth inning after Indian pitchers walked the bases full with one out.

Ottney delivered once again with another RBI single as Cook was safe on a close play at home.

The bases remained loaded as Decker returned to the plate. After fouling off 2-2 and 3-2 pitches to stay alive, Decker smashed his second hit into center to drive in two more runs.

Decker, who had just three hits in 20

at bats entering the contest, said he was pleased with his overall performance Thursday.

"I started off a little slow and got hit kind of hard," Decker said. "I started to mix it up a little more and started finding the strike zone. I thought I threw better (Thursday) than I have all year.

"It feels good. I haven't been hitting very well and it's one of the first times I've hit the ball consistently throughout the whole game."

Decker remained in control from the mound as he cruised through the final three innings walking two Waite batters and surrendering no hits.

The Little Giants closed the book on the Indians in the sixth inning as Decker and Boukissen each drew walks and Kirt Munson provided a pinch-hit single to right to drive in a run.

Munson was the ninth Little Giant to get a hit in the game.

"We hit the ball pretty darn well one through nine," Dennings said. "If we get that kind of productivity there will be good things ahead for us."

Opelt followed with a sacrifice fly and Cook ended the game with an RBI single to right.

Little Giants crush Streaks

Abbott throws four innings of no-hit ball; Cook, Opelt homer

By KYLE TIMMONS
News-Messenger correspondent

For the second consecutive game the Fremont Ross baseball team made quick work of its opponent using a combination of stellar pitching and red hot bats.

Senior Mike Abbott tossed four innings of no-hit ball Friday as the Little Giants defeated Greater Buckeye Conference rival Sandusky 10-0 at Alumni Field.

After a scoreless opening inning, Abbott picked up his first strikeout on three straight pitches to Sandusky's Kevin Appell.

The next Blue Streak hitter then followed with a weak hit in which Abbott fired to first pulling the first baseman off the bag for an error.

But Abbott went right back to work as he struck out another Blue Streak before senior Aaron Opelt ended the inning with a spectacular diving catch near the center field fence.

Abbott finished the game with seven strikeouts.

"My last outing was pretty bad," said Abbott. "(Today) I got into a better groove faster."

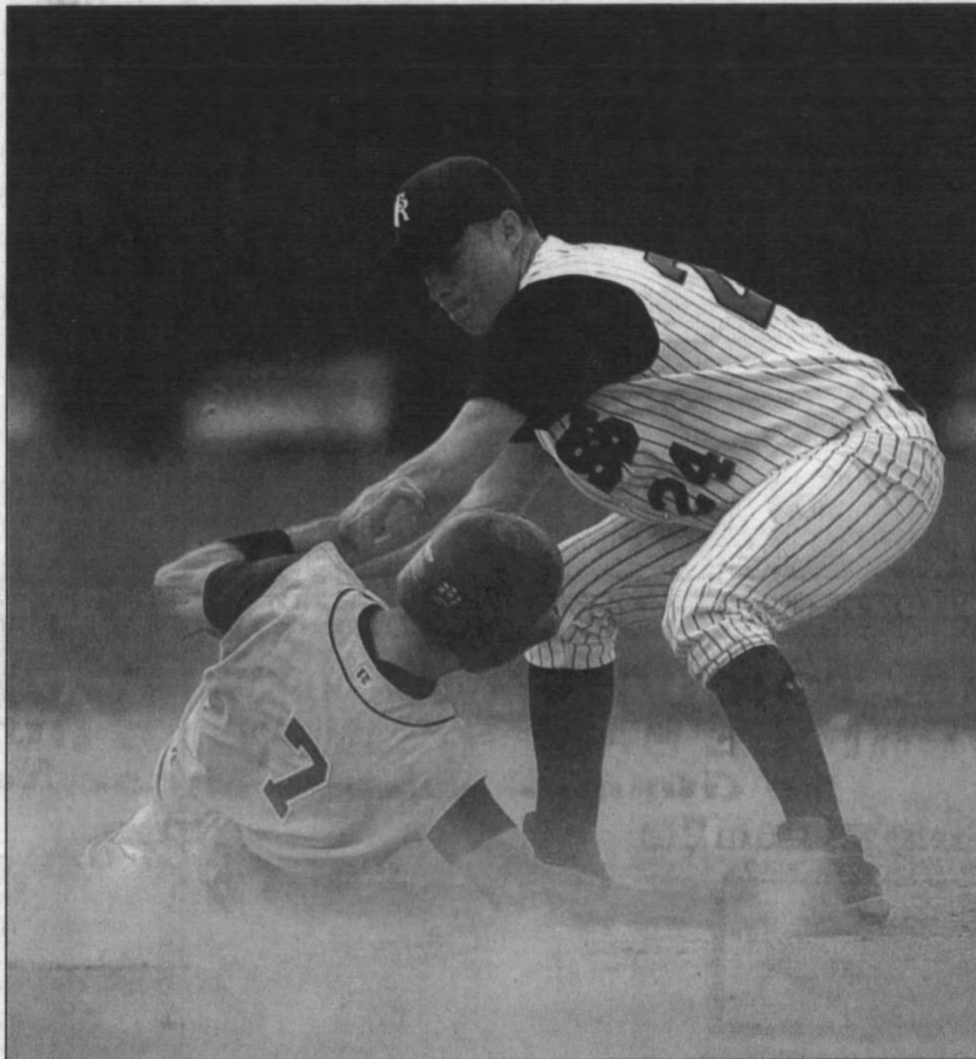
Junior Ryan Ottney complimented Abbott's pitching performance.

"Mike came out and threw the ball really well," said Ottney. "He kind of struggled at Findlay but he came right back and pitched a great game."

The Ross bats got things started in the second inning after Robbie Hall led the inning off with a double to left center field.

Hall advanced to third base on a passed ball and Trent Logan joined him on the bases by drawing a four-pitch walk.

Senior Billy Boukissen then drove the first Little



News-Messenger/Charlie Longton

FREMONT ROSS'S KYLE COOK tags a runner out during the first inning of Friday's Greater Buckeye Conference game against Sandusky. Cook also hit a home run as the Little Giants waxed the Blue Streaks.

Giant run home on a sacrifice fly to left field.

Ottney followed with a hard hit single into left field setting up the number nine hitter Kory Decker with runners at first and third.

Decker, who broke out of a hitting slump Thursday, smacked a single beyond the short stop picking up his first RBI of the game as Logan came around to score.

The Little Giants (12-4, 3-

1) tallied four more runs in the third inning as Kyle Cook provided some fireworks.

With one out in the inning, Cook crushed a 365-foot homer to left center field, his second dinger of the season.

"It was just a fastball a little inside," Cook said. "I just turned on it."

"I had a good pitch in my first at-bat and I just kind of spoiled it and got

jammed a little bit. I've been kind of slipping the past few games but I had a decent game today."

Hall and Logan followed with singles to left field and after a balk by Sandusky pitcher Mark Esposito, Boukissen came to plate with two runners in scoring position.

Boukissen provided his second sacrifice of the game as Fremont took a 4-0 lead.

"I thought we swung the

bats extremely well," said Little Giant coach Andy Dennings. "We were pretty disciplined all night and for the most part we took care of some things we needed to work on and it was a nice outing at the plate."

Ottney continued his torrid hitting by doubling to left field and driving in Logan. Ottney eventually

See ROSS, B2

Ross beats Sandusky

Continued From B1

came around to score as Decker gathered his second hit and second RBI of the night.

Ottney finished 3-3 with an RBI and a run scored while Decker was 2-2 with two RBI and a walk.

"We kind of slumped a little bit to start off the season," Ottney said.

"Everybody is sitting back and relaxing now and finally coming through with the bats.

"I've been able to have people on base every time I've come up so it's been able to help me out and get runs in and help the team out."

The Little Giants would then finish the Blue Streaks (4-9, 1-3) off in the fourth inning as 10 different batters came to the plate.

Abbott opened the inning singling to center and then stole second.

Then, with a 1-1 count, Opelt sent a towering fly ball to deep center field that just made its way over the fence for his fifth home run of the year.

"That was a shot," said Abbott. "Basically everyone is hitting right now and that's good to see, especially since we're in the middle of the league right now."

Logan would tally Fremont's final two runs by knocking in Cook and Hall, who had singled and doubled, respectively.

"They hit a lot of good shots," Sandusky coach Matt Martin said. "Gap shots, singles, doubles and got a few in the air for two home runs. What else can you say?"

Cory Hull pitched the final frame for Fremont surrendering a two-out double to Sandusky's Brian Mullins and striking out one.

The Little Giants will be in action Saturday evening at 6:30 as they play Oak Harbor at Gray's Field.

The News-Messenger, Fremont, Ohio

www.thenews-messenger.com

Tuesday, April 25, 2006

B1

HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL: FREMONT ROSS 14, LEXINGTON 6

11-run fifth inning sparks Little Giants win

Opelt blasts team-leading sixth homer in rally

By KYLE TIMMONS
News-Messenger correspondent

The way the Fremont Ross bats have been swinging lately, one might come to expect to see double digits on the scoreboard.

But Lexington hoped to still the Little Giants' bats during their non-conference game Monday.

Their wishes were granted for the first three and a

half innings but Fremont, who averages more than nine runs a game, rose to the occasion as they dropped 11 runs on the Minutemen in the fifth inning en route to a 14-6 victory.

"That's kind of been our little motto lately," said Ross coach Andy Dennings. "Start slow and then start swinging in the middle innings."

Lexington (9-6) used a strong pitching performance by junior Ben Wallace to grab a 4-0 advantage after 3 1/2 innings.

Wallace wasn't perfect during the first three innings as the Little Giants

had several opportunities to score.

In the second inning, the Little Giants led off with two hits as Robbie Hall reached on an infield single and Trent Logan sent a dribbler down the left field line for a double.

After a pop out by Billy Boukissen, Ryan Ottney hit a grounder to third in which Hall was thrown out trying to score at home. Kory Decker then ended the second with a flyout.

A similar situation occurred in the third inning as Fremont ran themselves out of an opportunity to score as Aaron Hinkle was

thrown out trying to advance to third on a single by Mike Abbott.

But the Little Giants began to stir things up in the bottom of the fourth as Hall, who finished 3-for-4, opened the inning with a single.

Two batters later, Boukissen drew a walk and Ottney delivered big in the clutch as he lined an RBI single into left.

Decker brought in Fremont's second run as he doubled down the right field line. Hinkle then brought Ottney home on a sacrifice fly to center.

After the Minutemen tal-

lied another run to take a 5-3 lead, the potent Little Giant offense came to bat in the bottom of the fifth as Lexington removed Wallace from the mound in favor of junior Zac Hiser.

"Wallace was starting to get up in the zone a little bit," said Lexington coach Jeff Strickler. "(Fremont) started to hit him hard and I had already planned on using Hiser today but I had no idea that it would turn out the way it did."

Senior Aaron Opelt, who leads the team in home runs, greeted the new Lexington hurler with a blast to right field, his sixth

homer of the season.

"I was watching him warm up," said Opelt. "The first pitch, I knew he was going to throw me a fastball so I figured I'd get on and drive it."

That seemed to be the sounding alarm for the Little Giants as Hiser fell apart.

"Aaron seemed to pretty much lead us off with that big home run," Ottney said. "Everybody got going and (their pitcher) was throwing mediocre and we weren't just sitting back on it and driving the ball and

See ROSS, B2

Ross wallops Lexington

Continued From B1

finally, when we did, we started hitting the ball."

The next five batters, Cook, Hall, Logan, Cory Hull and Ottney, all followed with singles.

"They were sitting on Hiser's fastball and he had trouble getting the curveball down," Strickler said.

Six different Fremont batters drove in runs as the first 11 men to the plate reached and scored before Lexington could end the inning.

"Any time any of our batters can see one pitcher three times we're going to start hitting the ball off him," said Opelt. "After we got going, we just hit the ball hard and everybody did."

Ottney, who pitched the final four innings of the game picking up the victory, batted 3-for-4 with a double, two RBI

and two runs scored.

"Ryan is starting to hit his stride a little bit hitting the baseball," Dennings said. "We definitely wanted to get him some innings today (pitching)."

"He hasn't pitched as much as we would like. He's coming around a lot. He's a kid that we thought would do some good things for us this year and it's turned out that's what he's doing now."

Ottney surrendered just three hits while striking out two.

"I was able to find the strike zone finally," said Ottney. "(The umpire) had a tight strike zone throughout the game but once I got it going it started to open up and I started to find the spots a lot easier."

Abbott, Opelt, and Logan each added two hits for the Little Giants who improve to 14-4.

Fremont will travel to Napoleon for a league contest today.

Little Giants again top Lima

By KYLE TIMMONS

News-Messenger correspondent

The Lima Senior baseball team self-destructed Friday at Alumni Field, dropping a Greater Buckeye Conference match-up 10-4 and falling to Fremont Ross for the second time this season.

The Spartans (2-15, 0-5) took a 3-2 lead into the bottom half of the fifth inning before collapsing.

With one out, senior Mike Abbott slapped a single towards left field to begin the Little Giant rally as Lima pitchers Theo Law, Matt Ehora and Justin Conaway began the pitching implosion.

The next six Fremont batters, drew walks bringing home four runs as the Little Giants moved ahead 6-3.

"Pitching killed us," said Spartan coach Jim Hay. "One kid (Law) got tired, the next one (Ehora) didn't come in mentally ready and we melted down and totally fell apart."

After a fly out by Aaron Hinkle, Paul Hershey lined a single to left field, bringing home Trent Logan and Kory Decker.

"We were taking until we got one (strike) at that point," said Fremont coach Andy Dennings. "Even when they brought the new pitcher in that continued to work for us."

"Our kids were pretty disciplined. We knew the zone pretty well and it turned out well for us. It was nice to see us have the discipline at the plate most of the game."

See ROSS, B2

Ross crushes Lima Senior

Continued From B1

The Little Giants cruised from there as pitcher Ryan Ottney pitched a complete game.

"(Lima) hit a couple of balls hard, but I knew they didn't have a whole lot of hits," Dennings said. "For the most part he kept the ball down and when you stay down in the zone good things are going to happen for you."

Ottney gave up just two earned runs on three hits while striking out seven Lima batters.

"(Ottney) threw the ball well," Hay said. "He throws with good velocity, changes speeds well and he was in control."

The Spartans' first three runs came in the third inning after Ottney walked the first two batters and then threw the ball away trying to get the lead runner on a sacrifice bunt to tie the game at 1.

Lima's center fielder Gregg Wellman then sacrificed Patrick Maginnity home and Matt Beggin finished the third inning scoring with an RBI single.

Ross (15-4, 4-1) pulled to within one run in the fourth inning as Kyle Cook reached on an infield single followed by Robbie Hall's second hit of the game.

"I just stay on top and hit the top half of the ball and the ball is looking like a beach ball right now," Hall said. "I'm just trying to stay on top of (the ball)."

"I'm not much of a pop up, long ball hitter. I just try to make contact and put it in play. It works and wins games."

Hall finished 3-for-3 with a double, three RBI and a run scored and is batting .566 on the season.

"Robbie is getting it done at the plate," Dennings said. "He is swinging the bat extremely well right now. We really can't ask for a whole lot more. He's hitting the ball hard and hitting it all over the field."

Logan then loaded the bases on a bunt before Cook scored on a sacrifice fly to center by Ottney to make the score 3-2 in favor of Lima before the fifth inning's walk-a-thon.

Ross tallied its final two runs in the sixth inning after Aaron Opelt drew a leadoff walk and Cook legged out his second infield single as

Opelt scored Fremont's ninth run.

Cook would end the Little Giants' scoring one batter later on a single by Hall.

Fremont will travel to Marion Harding on Tuesday for another GBC game.

Baseball

Ross trounces Harding

The Little Giants' bats sent Marion Harding out of a share of the Greater Buckeye Conference.

Fremont Ross exploded for eight runs in the fourth on the way to a 14-2 five-inning shellacking of the Presidents on Tuesday.

Kyle Cook and Paul Hershey each homered. Cook also pitched an inning of relief for the Little Giants (16-4, 5-1 GBC) for Mike Abbott.

Abbott (5-0) gave up just one run in four innings, and went 3-for-5 with 3 RBI, a double and two runs scored.

HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL: ROSS 8, SANDUSKY 5

Hershey's solid outing paces Little Giants win

Ross stakes starter to seven-run lead

By KYLE TIMMONS

News-Messenger correspondent

SANDUSKY — The Fremont Ross baseball team took advantage of a seven-run lead after four innings and solid pitching by Paul Hershey as they held on for an 8-5 Greater Buckeye Conference victory at Sandusky Friday.

The Little Giants got things started early after Mike Abbott slapped a single into left field with one out.

Abbott took second on a stolen base and moved over to third as the pick-off at-

tempt found its way into center field.

With Abbott on third, Aaron Opelt smacked a single to center driving in Abbott. Opelt later came around to score as Kyle Cook reached first on an error by Sandusky shortstop Matt Feltner.

Ross, which improved to 17-4 (6-1), tacked on a third run in the second inning as Trent Logan doubled to center to lead off the inning.

Logan took third on a passed ball and tagged up to score on a flyout by Ryan Ottney to center to give the Little Giants a 3-0 lead.

Meanwhile, Hershey was settling into his position on the mound as he retired the Blue Streaks in order in the second inning, capped by a strikeout of Dominick Frausto.

Hershey gave up just one hit through the first four innings and struck out a total of four Sandusky batters during the contest.

"He threw exceptionally well," said Fremont coach Andy Dennings. "He hasn't thrown that much all year and we've been really pleased with what he's been doing. I thought he did and absolute wonderful job and I couldn't ask for anything more."

The Little Giants expanded their lead in the top of the third as Abbott knocked his second single into center before being moved up to second on an infield hit by Opelt.

The two base runners moved up to second and third on another Sandusky wild pitch and Fremont

capitalized two batters later as Robbie Hall reached on an error while Abbott scored his second run of the game.

Abbott finished 3-for-4 in the game and scored two runs.

With Hall and Opelt on first and third, respectively, Logan came to the plate seeking to be more aggressive than his earlier at-bat.

Two pitches later Logan registered his first homer of the season on a blast to left center, bringing in three runs and giving Fremont a seven-run cushion.

"With the double I was just looking to get something in play and help the team out by getting on base and getting into scoring position somehow," Logan said. "(On the home run) my

weight was back a little bit more and I did a better job.

"I was a little more aggressive on that at bat. I was just looking again for another line drive shot and it just carried a little further than the other one."

Dennings complimented Logan, who is batting sixth.

"He's been swinging the bat real well," Dennings said. "Like I said earlier in the year, he's been above and beyond expectations and he's been really swinging the bat well and he's been doing it all year. He's a pretty solid player."

Sandusky wasn't finished though as their bats came to life in the fifth inning. The first four batters reached base following a lead-off single by Mike Sanders.

Sanders put the Blue Streaks on the board, scoring on a Gage Will single.

At the same time Kevin Appell was keeping his team's chances alive by retiring nine out of 10 Fremont batters during a middle inning streak.

"(Appell) pitched a good game," said Sandusky coach Matt Martin. "Even in the first four innings when we booted a few balls for him that gave Fremont four or five outs in an inning and they took advantage."

Sandusky continued its comeback effort in the following inning as well as Sanders got involved again by driving in Appell on a hit to right making it 7-2.

See ROSS, B2

Ross maintains GBC lead

Continued From B1

Cook provided a little extra insurance in the seventh as he belted a deep home run to left field giving Fremont what seemed to be a comfortable 8-2 advantage.

But things weren't that comfortable as Sandusky made one final rally at the Little Giants.

With two outs in the bottom of the seventh, Hershey walked Feltner, putting runners on first and second.

The next three Blue Streak batters followed with singles pulling Sandusky to within three at 8-5 as the tying run came to the plate in Sanders.

"We never gave up," Martin said. "I

would have liked to see us the first three innings play like we did the last four."

Dennings pulled Hershey and put in Ottney to face Sanders in hope to close things out.

Three pitches later Ottney had picked up the save as he struck out Sanders on consecutive pitches.

The win keeps Fremont in a tie for first place in the conference with a busy week ahead of them.

"We have (Toledo) St. John coming to town tomorrow, then our tournament game Monday and then three big GBC games in a row," Dennings said. "It's going to be a tough stretch but the nice thing is that we're playing for something."

St. John's Williams keeps bats in check

By KYLE TIMMONS

News-Messenger correspondent

Toledo St. John's pitcher Sean Williams did something Saturday that not too many pitchers have done against Fremont Ross.

Williams tamed the Little Giant bats for five innings as the Titans held on to defeat Fremont 4-2 at Alumni Field.

"From what I understand they are a pretty darn good hitting team," Titan coach Ed Mouch said of Fremont, which averages around 10 runs a game.

St. John's opened the game by capitalizing on an unusual error by Ross second baseman Mike Abbott.

"At the start of the game we didn't come out and play," said Ross coach Andy Dennings. "We had a couple of very uncommon errors, that just shouldn't have happened and they took advantage of it."

While both teams exchanged stellar defensive plays through the first five innings Williams was shutting down Ross from

the mound.

In fact, the Little Giants (17-5, 6-1) didn't see their first base runner until there was one out in the third when Billy Boukissen drew a four pitch walk.

Boukissen was then forced out on the next batter as Kory Decker hit into an inning ending double play.

Ross seemed to have something going in the fourth as Abbott hit a one-out pitch to left for its first hit of the game.

Aaron Opelt then drew a walk to put runners on first and second before the Titans turned their second double play in two innings to retire the Little Giants.

Boukissen doubled to lead off the sixth and scored on Aaron Hinkle's single.

Robbie Hall also doubled to lead off the seventh and ultimately capped the scoring on a passed ball.

"They made plays and we didn't," Dennings said. "Our pitchers did pretty well but you have to make plays behind them."

HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL TOURNAMENT: ASHLAND 6, FREMONT ROSS 5

Ashland's Turner stills Little Giants' bats

Ross postseason ends; three games remain in GBC slate

By KYLE TIMMONS
News-Messenger correspondent

MANSFIELD — Ashland coach Harley Eichhorn did his homework for Monday's Division I sectional championship matchup against Fremont Ross.

But it was the Arrows' pitcher, Tyler Turner, that passed the test as Ashland stymied the Little Giants' explosive offense by throwing a lot of off-speed pitches and prevailing 6-5.

"Fremont swings the bats better than anyone

I've seen this year," Eichhorn said. "I felt like we had a real nice preparation for Fremont."

"We have an excellent scout, one of our personnel, and he said that this team is going to hit fastballs. The key to that was getting ahead in the count, because if you get behind, then you have to lay it in there and then you are in trouble."

Turner fanned eight Little Giants and gave up just five hits in six innings of work giving Ashland the opportunity to pull ahead after a rocky first inning.

"Give (Turner) credit," said Ross coach Andy Dennings. "He kept us off balance and we just didn't show enough discipline at the plate."

After tallying one run in the top of the first and leaving the bases loaded, the Arrows made an early miscue to give Fremont an early advantage.

With two outs, senior Aaron Opelt hit a fly ball to right field and Ashland junior Ryan Hammer mis-played the ball in the sun as Opelt advanced to second on the error.

Eichhorn elected to intentionally walk Kyle Cook setting the table for senior Robbie Hall.

Opelt and Cook moved up a base on a passed ball by the Arrows (14-9) and Hall followed by ripping a 2-run single to center putting Fremont up 2-1.

The score remained that way until the top of the

fourth when Ross pitcher Mike Abbott got into some two-out trouble.

Hammer slapped a single to right and Brandon Harris drew a walk setting the plate for Ashland first baseman Jarrod Parks.

Parks crushed Abbott's first pitch and the ball wrapped around the left field foul pole to give the Arrows a 4-2 lead.

Turner continued to fend off Fremont's potent lineup until Billy Boukissen came to bat with two outs in the bottom of the sixth.

After Boukissen walked, junior Ryan Ottney drove his second homer of the year over the Jeep sign in left center to tie the game at 4-4.

"(The home run) was

kind of a downer," Eichhorn said. " (Turner) had that 3-2 pitch that was close to the corner and he didn't get the call. But then he made a mistake and Fremont is a very good team and if you make a mistake a good hitter hits it out."

But Ashland showed a sign of resiliency in the seventh as Andrew Spicer dropped an RBI double into the left field corner with one out and Toby Lentz contributed another RBI double an out later to give the advantage back to the Arrows at 6-4.

"That was pivotal," said Eichhorn. "In this kind of situation, especially in a tied ball game, the last guy with the bat has the great advantage. Those two runs

were big."

Dennings agreed with Eichhorn.

"It kills you," said Dennings of turning the lead back over to the Arrows. "You get a big momentum swing and then you have a four pitch walk. That plays right into their hands."

Fremont then turned their tournament hopes to one last at-bat.

With one out, Abbott jumped on a 1-0 pitch and hit a single to right field.

Opelt followed with a single of his own to right moving Abbott to third with one out.

Cook then hit a grounder to first in which Abbott scored to pull the Little

See ROSS, B2

Ross postseason ends

Continued From B1

Giants to within one and putting Opelt in scoring position with two outs before Hall was retired on the final play, popping out to the third baseman.

"(Fremont) is a good team and we'd like to think that we're a good team," Eichhorn said. "When two good teams get together you have a one-run ball game, and tournament time is going to do that."

With the tournament now behind

them, the Little Giants (17-6) must regroup and turn their attention to their attempt to win back-to-back Greater Buckeye Conference championships.

"We just have to play with a little pride," said Dennings. "We have a chance to go back-to-back GBC champs and you have one week left to do it. Seniors, it's your last hurrah, you've only got three more games."

Fremont will host Findlay today as the Little Giants have a one-game lead in the conference.

Little Giants get back on winning track

Ross has shot at winning GBC with two games left

By KYLE TIMMONS
News-Messenger correspondent

Fremont Ross broke a two-game losing streak Tuesday, downing Greater Buckeye Conference opponent Findlay 11-6 at Alumni Field as the Little Giants move to 18-6 (7-1 GBC) on the season.

Fremont wasted little time with their bats as Mike Abbott drove a Andrew Badertscher pitch into right giving the Little Giants their first base runner with one down in the opening inning.

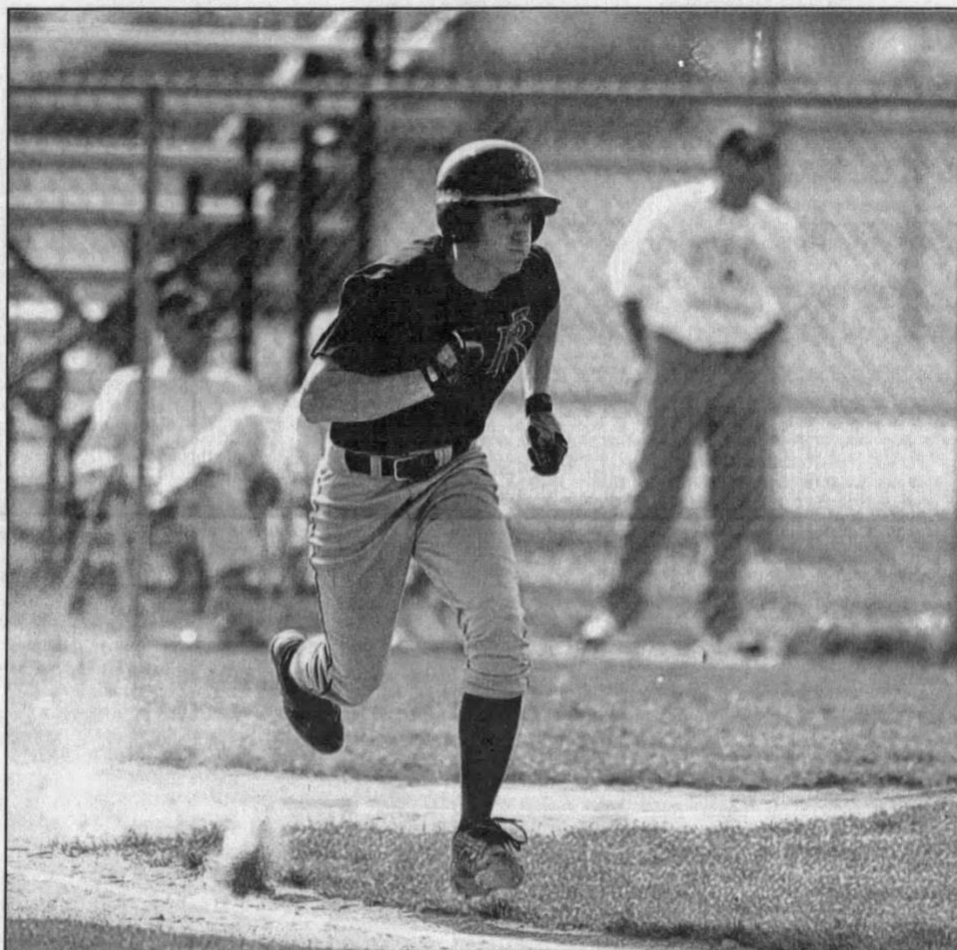
After Aaron Opelt was hit with a 3-0 pitch, Kyle Cook provided Fremont's first run by singling home Abbott.

Robbie Hall ripped a two-run triple into right, scoring two runs to give the Little Giants a 3-0 advantage.

"It definitely makes us breathe a little better in the dugout," said Ross coach Andy Dennings. "It changes the complexion of the game and it changes what they can do and it gives us more options."

Fremont starting pitcher Paul Hershey retired the Findlay bats successfully in the second before the Little Giants took advantage of a two-out error on the Trojans' right fielder when Billy Boukissen hit a fly ball into right. Kory Decker came home on the error, having been walked a batter earlier.

Hershey then fell into a little trouble in the third as he walked the first four Trojans that came to the plate. Three of the walks were on four straight pitches and brought Hershey's walk total up to seven in the first



News-Messenger/Charlie Longton/clongton@gannett.com

FREMONT ROSS'S MIKE Abbott breaks for first after getting a hit in the first inning. Abbott knocked in the Little Giants' first run of the game.

three innings.

Findlay stranded 10 batters, and left the bases full once in the first and once in the third.

"That really doesn't faze us," said Findlay coach Jeff Stutzman. "We've been in that position before and we've been able to bounce out of that."

It would be nice to get

some of those guys in but you know, it's a seven-inning ballgame."

But Hershey worked out of the jam as he held Findlay to just two runs in the inning after forcing two infield pop-ups and a ground-out to end the frame.

"I was impressed to see what he did," Dennings said. "He had a rough little

start there but we got out giving up what, a run, maybe."

After walking the first two batters in the fourth, Dennings pulled Hershey in favor of Cory Hull.

Hull retired the first two batters he faced before Tim Voorhees tied the game at 4 with a two-out single to left.

The Little Giants responded immediately in their half of the fourth.

Hull legged out an infield single to begin the inning and three batters later, the Little Giants had runners at first and second with two outs.

Opelt loaded the bases,

See ROSS, C2

Ross beats Findlay

Continued From B1

hitting a grounder to third and beating out the throw to first.

Senior Kyle Cook then followed by being struck out but advanced to first as the pitch went to the backstop and the Findlay catcher made no attempt to throw out Hull at home.

Hall then earned a bases-loaded walk to make the score 6-4 before Trent Logan broke the game wide open.

With a 3-1 count in Logan's favor, Logan crushed a pitch over the left fielder and to the fence plating three more Little Giants with a double.

"I've been struggling hitting the ball the past three games," Logan said. "It's

nice to finally see something finally go somewhere for me.

"I think it turned the game around as we came out and got more into the game and excited."

Fremont tallied two more runs, one in the fifth and one in the sixth, as Hull retired eight out of nine batters in a row.

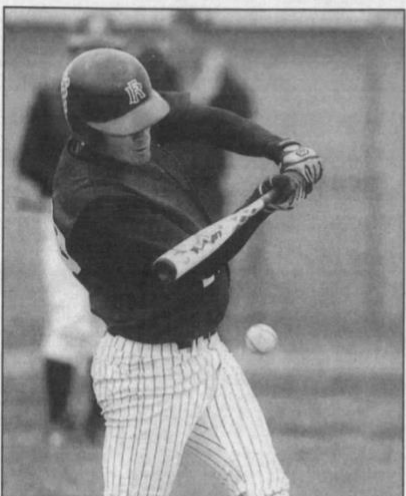
"We did a nice job on defense," said Logan. "Cory Hull did a nice job on the mound."

With one down in the seventh, Findlay managed two more runs on three hits to make the final score 11-6.

Fremont will play back-to-back games against Napoleon on the road Thursday and home Friday. One win will guarantee a share of the GBC title.

HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL: FREMONT ROSS 11, NAPOLEON 1

Little Giant seniors close home careers in style



THE LITTLE Giants' Robbie Hall swings over a pitch in Saturday's GBC title clinching victory over Napoleon. Ross has won the GBC the last two years.

By KYLE TIMMONS
News-Messenger correspondent

Saturday was a day for the seniors on the final home baseball game at Alumni Field but it was the entire team that contributed in an 11-1 thumping of Napoleon as Fremont Ross won its second consecutive Greater Buckeye Conference title.

The Little Giants (19-6, 8-1), with seven seniors, were led by pitcher Mike Abbott who gave up just two hits in five innings while also serving up two hits. He also scored three times and drove in a run.

"All of us seniors came out at the beginning of the year and we all made goals to win the league and repeat ourselves from last year," said senior Billy Boukissen. "We really came out (Saturday) and made sure we got it done."

"It feels good to come out and prove ourselves again and prove that it wasn't a fluke last year," Ross coach Andy Dennings echoed Boukissen's comments.

"It's a great feeling," Dennings said. "These kids have worked hard all year and its nice to see us accomplish one of our team goals."

"They are a great group of kids and they came out and did

"It's a great feeling. These kids have worked hard all year and it's nice to see us accomplish one of our team goals. They are a great group of kids and they came out and did what they were supposed to do."

— Little Giant coach Andy Dennings on his team's second straight GBC title.

what they were supposed to do."

Ross took a 1-0 lead in the first on an RBI single by Kyle Cook, driving home Abbott who had reached on a fielder's choice.

The Little Giants then provided the offensive burst that sent the Wildcats reeling in the second as all nine starters got into the scoring act.

After Napoleon's pitcher Dustin Smith induced a ground out to open the inning, he proceeded to walk Kory Decker and followed by hitting Paul Hershey to put runners at first and second.

Cory Hull then knocked an RBI single to right between the first and second basemen before Boukissen drove a double to left center putting the Little Giants up 4-0.

Abbott continued the offensive attack ripping an RBI single to

left before Smith walked Aaron Opelt.

Cook again delivered with his second RBI of the game before Hall tallied the Little Giants final score of the inning as he hustled out an infield single.

Trent Logan and Decker each added a single in the inning as Ross led 8-0.

Abbott continued to get things done on the mound with the support of his defense.

"It was kind of hard to get warmed up because it was so cold and rainy," Abbott said. "I kind of found a groove after a little bit."

To open the third inning, Napoleon's Brandon Cramer hit a ball to shallow center which seemed to be on its way toward the Wildcats' first hit of the game but Opelt came out of nowhere and made a spectacular

diving catch to provide the inning's first out.

"That was a great play," said Abbott.

Abbott continued about the support of his fellow teammates: "When someone has been down, someone's stepped up and picked them up. It's been great playing with them."

Abbott also received stellar support from the rest of the defensive cast including a nice stop by Hull on Napoleon's first single (infield hit) and later in the fourth on a line out in which Kirt Munson dove to his left to keep the ball from leaving the infield.

With the Little Giants in control at 10-1 Ross came to bat in his half of the fifth hoping to seal the conference championship.

Cook opened the inning with an infield single and moved to second on a grounder by Hall.

"I just went up and tried to hit the ball," Cook said. "The last couple games I hadn't had too many good at bats. I just went up and the pitches were outside and I just tried to take them the other way."

After a Munson out, Fremont's second in the inning, Decker drove in the game's final run to seal the deal. And a second straight league title.

Little Giants win program record 20th game of year

Fremont Ross coach Andy Dennings is under the impression that his Little Giants made history Friday.

Mike Abbott (7-0) closed out an unblemished campaign on the mound as Ross won a program record 20th game by topping Napoleon 15-3 in six innings in the Greater Buckeye Conference.

"The kids are really excited," Dennings said. "Twenty wins was one of the team goals we set out for. It's a special group of seniors. It's a great group that will be missed."

The Little Giants won the GBC outright this season.

Abbott, catcher Billy Boukissen, center fielder Aaron Opelt, pitcher Cory Hull, left fielder Robbie Hall, shortstop Kyle Cook, Kory Decker and Cody Bischoff will graduate for Ross (20-6, 9-1).

"It's a great group," Dennings said. "Whatever they choose to do in life they'll succeed. They showed a ton of dedication to the program and the direction it's moving."

Abbott was his typically efficient self as he walked four and struck out two in three innings. He gave up five hits and two earned runs before being relieved by Hull.

"He's thrown the ball extremely well all year," Dennings said of Abbott. "He's not a power pitcher but he's a kid that knows how to throw the baseball when he's on the mound."

Hull allowed two hits and no runs in three innings.

Ross scored five runs in the first inning and five in the sixth. Cook singled, doubled, scored three runs and drove in four, Hall doubled twice, scored three times and drove in two runs, and Trent Logan singled twice and drove in two.

Abbott doubled and scored two runs, Boukissen doubled and Opelt singled, drove in a run and scored three times. Ryan Ottney added a double and two RBI.