

IT'S .500 OR BUST



JONATHAN BIRD/STAFF PHOTO

Fremont Ross' Stefan Johnson dives for the ball during a baseball game against Anthony Wayne in Bowling Green last year.

Little Giants baseball looking to rebound from losing season

RICH MCGOWAN
ASST. EDITOR/SPORTS REPORTER

FREMONT — Since the Fremont Ross baseball season ended last spring, the Little Giants have been reciting the same three numbers in anticipation of the 2015 season.

Scrawled on walls and marker boards, 1,116/102/238 has been a constant refrain in the Ross clubhouse.

1,116 in reference to the Little Giants' 11-16 record last year, the team's first losing season in coach Mark

King's nine-year tenure. The sub-.500 record can be largely attributed to the Little Giants defensive miscues, 102 fielding errors, and offensive shortcomings, a .238 team batting average.

Ross' players know their 2014 statistics by heart.

"When we're in the weight room, when we're running, when we throw, we talk about it all the time," King said. "We used those numbers all winter long as a push for work ethic. These kids will not settle for that. They've put in a lot of time and a lot of effort through the winter. Their attitude, their drive and ability to win is there."

King said the Little Giants enter the season with the deepest pitching staff he can recall. Ross returns last season's top hurler, left-hander Dominic

Cominsky who went 5-2 last year with one save and a 2.65 ERA. In addition to their ace returning, the Little Giants will also boast a staff that runs at least eight pitchers deep, including starters Tanner Albert, Jalen Slick, Russ Yeast and Grant McConnell.

"We're usually around four and we have eight right now with five right-handers and three left-handers," King said. "By mid-year last year we were trying to push kids to six or seven innings. This is going to give us the ability to run a lot more guys out there."

While pitching figures to be a strength, whoever is on the mound will need the defensive behind him to cut down on its miscues.

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Little Giants

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“And probably 50 percent of those were throwing errors,” King said. “Most of those kids on last year’s team were first-year starters and we played pretty tentatively. ... We put an extremely big emphasis on our defensive program this year.”

While no team wants to endure a losing season, King believes the motivation the Little Giants took from their struggles of a year ago will spawn a new run of success for Ross baseball.

“I won’t put a number of anything, but I don’t expect this team to be sub-.500 like there were last year,” King said. “We’ll be disappointed as a team in our effort if we match last season’s numbers.”

No momentum for Little Giants

Back-to-back 5-run innings carry Port Clinton in season opener for teams

RICH MCGOWAN
SPORTS REPORTER

PORT CLINTON — Momentum is a wave. If you're on top of it, you can ride it a long way.

But if the wave is crashing down upon you, it can be all but impossible to halt.

As the Port Clinton and Fremont Ross baseball seasons opened up Monday afternoon, the Redskins grabbed a hold of the ever-elusive momentum and never let it go. The Little Giants, however, fell victims to the power of the wave.

Port Clinton batted around the order in back-to-back 5-run innings as the Redskins defeated the Little Giants 10-3 in a season-opener as fun for Port Clinton as it was disappointing for Ross.

"I saw a team that came prepared," Port Clinton coach Tracy Bodi said. "The hard practices paid off. They took the ap-

proaches at the plate we've been working on and made adjustments for the third inning on and put some pressure on the their team. It was just a real solid team effort."

Port Clinton (1-0) has little time to bask in the win as the Redskins travel to Sandusky Tuesday afternoon. Ross (0-1) plays Tuesday at Clyde.

"I'm very disappointed with how we came out today to start the year," Ross coach Mark King said. "What I didn't see was execution, straight-up. It wasn't from a lack of working on it. Mentally, I

didn't think we were where we should have been."

Ross opened the scoring with a pair of runs in the top of the first inning, including an RBI double from Travis Brown. Port Clinton starting pitcher Trevor Frias rebounded from a bumpy first two innings to throw a solid game for the Redskins. He threw more than 100 pitches over six innings, allowing just three hits with three walks and five strikeouts.

He got solid help from his defense, in-

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THE NEWS MESSENGER

Fremont Ross base runner Pete Contreras dives back to first base ahead of a pickoff attempt to Port Clinton first baseman Aiden Rosper.

Opener

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cluding a nice inning-ending 4-6-3 double play from Aidan Rspert, Drew Foder and Trevor Monk to end his day after the sixth inning.

"Trevor struggled the first two innings with the strike zone but only gave up two (runs)," Bodi said. "We had two big pick-offs at second base and he only got stronger. Everybody played defense behind him and it was a really good team effort."

The Redskins rallied from their early deficit in a big way in the third inning as their first eight batters reached base safely. After Port Clinton tied the game with a pair of runs, Foder cleared the bases with one swing. He launched a ball over the fence in left field for a three-run home run and a 5-2 lead.

"That gave us some energy," Foder said of his home run. "It had a little bit of pop off of it. I had to battle back, got down 0-2. He left one up and it was off from there."

Following Port Clinton's big inning,

Frias then struck out the Little Giants in order, quickly putting the Redskins back to bat where they continued the onslaught.

"That's where we didn't respond," King said. "We had to come out and set some kind of tone and we took a called two called-third (strikes) and a swinging third. You have to come out aggressive and put yourself back in the game."

Port Clinton again batted around the order. RBI base hits by Scott Stone, Max Avis and Nolen Smith helped the Redskins grow their lead to 10-2.

Once again, Ross followed Port Clinton's big offensive output by being retired in order.

Dominic Cominsky took the loss on the mound for the Little Giants as Ross pitchers combined to give up 10 runs on seven hits and nine walks while the defense committed four errors.

"I have a lot of confidence in our kids. We'll be fine," King said. "I thought we were more prepared than we showed today but it's a long season."

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Mowry's game-winning single lifts Clyde in extra innings

Devin Mowry hit a game-winning single in the bottom of the ninth inning Tuesday as Clyde's baseball team edged Fremont Ross 6-5.

Mowry finished with two hits and three RBIs. John Jackson also had two hits and scored a pair of runs for the Fliers (2-0).

Ryan Kelly earned the win in relief, pitching $4\frac{2}{3}$ innings giving up one run on six hits while striking out four.

Bryce Moreno had three hits for the Little Giants (0-2) and teammate Russ Yeast had a pair of hits and scored three runs.

Tanner Albert took the loss, striking out nine over seven innings.

A game-ending blast leads Ross to a win

Fremont Ross tops Oak Harbor with extra inning walk-off

Tanner Albert hit a walk-off three-run home run Thursday to lift Fremont Ross to an 11-8 win in eight innings over Oak Harbor.

In addition to his game-ending blast, Albert finished 3-for-5 at the plate with a pair of doubles and four RBIs.

"Tanner had a great night," Ross coach Mark King said. "He did a great job."

Russ Yeast, Michael Hufford and Pete Contreras each went 2-4 at the plate while Jalen Slick and Grant McConnell each drove in a pair of runs.

Grant Gallagher picked up the win for the Little Giants, pitching 4.1 innings in relief. Gallagher allowed one earned run on three hits and one walk with five strikeouts.

Ross (2-4 overall) returns to action Friday at home as the Little Giants host Toledo Central Catholic in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference opener.

David Tooman went 3-3 at the plate for Oak Harbor.

event in 44.93 while teammate Tyler Drown finished second in 46.32.

SJCC softball tops Old Fort

Be Reardon went 3-for-4 at the plate with three RBIs, a double and three runs scored and she also picked up the win in the pitcher's circle as the St. Joseph Central Catholic softball team defeated Old Fort 13-3 Thursday.

Reardon allowed just four hits and one walk while striking out four.

SJCC totaled 13 hits and enjoyed five- and six-run innings the game open. Ashley Burns went 2-4 with four RBIs and freshman Callie Kelbley hit her first varsity home run and drove in three runs. SJCC improved to record to 5-4 overall, 2-1 in the Sandusky River League.

Peyton Miller hit a triple and Cheyenne Halbisen and Mackenzie Ward each had an RBI as Old Fort totaled just five hits. The Stockaders fell to 4-2, 0-2.

Woodmore baseball tops Margaretta

Woodmore's baseball team scored

DOUBLE PLAYS DOOM ROSS

Toledo Central Catholic's fielding put game away

RICH MCGOWAN
SPORTS REPORTER

FREMONT — When does three plus four plus six equal two?

When the Fremont Ross baseball team hits into inning-ending, momentum-sapping double plays. The Little Giants saw potential game-changing rallies cut short in back-to-back innings Friday as Ross dropped its Three Rivers Athletic Conference opener to Toledo Central Catholic 7-3.

"I can't really blame my kids, though," Ross coach Mark King said. "They put nice swings on them. We hit a shot to the gap but the kid made a nice play and then they were loaded with one out and hit a rocket right at the shortstop."

Trailing 4-2 in the bottom of the fourth inning, the Little Giants quickly loaded the bases with no outs. Ross, however, failed to capitalize, first flying out to left then hitting a tailor-made grounder to short for a 6-4-3 double play to end the inning.

The following inning Ross again threatened to close the deficit. The Little Giants put runners on the corners with one out before another ground ball, this one to second base, started yet another doubleplay, a 4-6-3.

"Obviously the two double plays were game-changers," Central Catholic coach Jeff Mielcarek said.

The Irish then took the momentum created by its defense and carried it over to offense. Central Catholic first six hitters reached base and grew its lead to 7-3. Central Catholic's Colin Kaucher hit a two-run inside-the-park home run when his blast to right-center field eluded the outstretched glove of diving centerfielder Russ Yeast.

Ross got a run back in the bottom of the sixth but could not climb out of its hole.

The Little Giants fell behind 4-1 in the third inning when a combination of defenses miscues aided the Irish offense.

Left fielder Grant McConnell lost a fly ball in the afternoon sun as Cameron Best made his way to second. Then a pair of throwing errors to first base led to Best and Jayson Cleghorn scoring an increasing Central Catholic's lead to



MOLLY CORFMAN/NEWS-MESSENGER

Toledo Central Catholic's Colin Kaucher slides past Fremont Ross' catcher Eliseo Contreras to score an inside-the-park home run in the sixth inning Friday at Ross High School. Central Catholic won 7-3.

4-1.

"I didn't think we played bad baseball game," King said. "I thought we battled. A break here or there, and we gave three of the first four runs away."

Jalen Slick, Nick Michael and Eliseo Contreras each had multiple hits for the Little Giants while Yeast, Contreras and Bryce Moreno each had an RBI.

The loss drops the Little Giants to 2-5 overall and 0-1 in the TRAC.

Despite the loss, King liked how his team battled against its deficit and has seen his team improve from a slow start to the season.

"We had a rough start the first three or four games," King said. "I don't take this as playing at the same level we played the first four games. We're swinging the bats a lot better. The competitive spirit is coming out and the defense is coming up."



MOLLY CORFMAN/NEWS-MESSENGER

The Fremont Ross baseball breaks a huddle during its loss to Toledo Central Catholic on Friday evening.

HIGH SCHOOL ROUNDUP

Ross hopes win over state champion turns season around

Though Fremont Ross' baseball doubleheader over the weekend got off on the wrong foot, the Little Giants close the day with a first for the program.

Ross defeated defending Division II state champion Defiance, 3-2, marking the first time the Little Giants have knocked off the Bulldogs.

"We've gotten extremely close with them a few times but never got over that hill. It's good for the kids' confidence," Ross coach Mark King said. "This I'm hoping become the game that kind of turns the whole start of the season in a positive manner."

Ross picked up all of its offense in the top of the third inning. Russ Yeast, Jalen Slick, Travis Brown and Bryce Moreno strung together consecutive hits, scoring three runs.

Pitcher Dominic Cominsky then held on. In his first game back from a shoulder injury, Cominksi threw a complete game allowing two earned runs on five hits and one walks while striking out five.

"I can't say enough about how well he pitched," King said of Cominsky.

Ross' upset win over Defiance came the same day the Little Giants lost 11-4 to Tinora.

Barring weather cancellations, the Little Giants will play 10 games in the next 11 days and begin the long stretch with a record of 3-6 overall, 0-1 in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference.

Ross baseball falls to Findlay

Fremont Ross' baseball team put the tying run on base in the top of the seventh inning but couldn't bring the base-runner in to score as the Little Giants lost to rival Findlay 5-4.

Tanner Albert went 2-for-3 at the plate for Ross while Michael Hufford, Nick Michael and Grant McConnell also had RBIs for the Little Giants.

Dominic Cominsky took the loss on the mound as he allowed five earned runs in five innings on nine hits and one walk while striking out two.

"We played well, Dom threw a nice game off the hill but he was kind of a victim," Ross coach Mark King said. "They had a swinging bunt, a flair over the shortstop's head and a wind-aided ball that flew into left field and it all happened in one inning. They scored four of five runs in (the third) inning."

The loss dropped the Little Giants' record to 3-7 overall, 0-2 in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference.

Slick homers, knocks in three in Ross win

Jalen Slick had three hits—including a homerun—and drove in three runs as Fremont Ross's baseball team run-ruled Lima Senior 19-8 in Thursday's Three Rivers Athletic Conference tilt.

The Little Giants (4-7, 1-2) plated nine runs atop the first inning and ten more over the next four frames.

"Over the last four games, we've come out with better approaches at the plate and we're executing better," Ross coach Mark King said. "In those four games, we're up 70 points in our batting average."

Russ Yeast also had three hit hits and three RBIs for the Little Giants. Albert Tanner, Nick Michael and Michael Hufford had two hits apiece. Albert had a double, while Michael and Hufford each drove in a pair of runs.

HIGH SCHOOLS

King notches 100th win as Little Giants' baseball coach

A win is a win no matter how you get it— just ask Fremont Ross's head baseball coach Mark King. Thursday's 13-8 win over Fostoria was King's 100th career win.

The Little Giants (6-11) got on the board first scoring a run atop the first inning, but the Redmen took a 6-1 lead after scoring three runs in both the third and fourth innings. Ross's offense came to life in the sixth inning plating 12 runs. Fostoria committed three errors in the game.

"It wasn't pretty," King said, "but a win is a win. I'll take it for my 100th (win)."

Michael Hufford doubled and drove in four runs for the Little Giants. Russ Yeast, Travis Brown and Teet Contreras each had two hits and an RBI. Bryce Moreno also had a pair of hits for Ross.

King (100-101) is now in his ninth year as head coach.
