

# Ross relies on 'short ball' to beat Clyde in sectional tourney

By **BOB MARKER**  
Sports Editor

**FINDLAY** — Playing "long ball" is nice but Fremont Ross settled for the "short ball" Monday in a 4-2 Division I high school softball sectional tournament finals win over Clyde.

Ross, 12-2, will play either Bowling Green or Springfield at 7 p.m., May 15 in the district tournament, also in Findlay. Clyde bows out of the tournament with a 12-5 record.

"We wanted to be aggressive," Ross coach Cheryl Schell said. "We were not hitting the ball in the holes today so we were taking advantage of anything we could get."

Ross scored twice in the fifth, watched as the Fliers scored single runs in the fifth and sixth to tie it, and then won it with two runs in the top of the seventh. In both innings, Ross runners scored from second on plays where the ball was not hit out of

the infield.

Winning pitcher Jessica Rollins and Clyde's Michelle Kovalaske were hooked up in a pitchers' duel for four innings. Kovalaske had surrendered one hit — a second inning single by Rollins — while keeping the Little Giants hitters off stride with her medium speed deliveries.

Rollins had survived a two-out, bases-loaded jam in the first inning.

Kovalaske's offerings produced 10 fly-ball or pop-outs. Clyde left fielder Mary Jo Hoffman had six putouts.

"Michelle's not an overpowering pitcher," Clyde coach Marc Marshall said, "but she throws strikes and makes the other team put the ball in play."

But the Little Giants' short game eventually shot down the Fliers.

Dawn Zerman's bunt single, Donna Steinberger's full-swing dribbler down the first base line

for a hit, two errors and Holly Pelfrey's double broke the scoreless tie in the fifth.

"I knew if Dawn put the ball down, she would get on," Schell, who called for the bunt, said. "I know when I get her to first, she can get to second."

Marshall said, "You know when she (Zerman) gets on first, she is going to steal second and then you have problems. Whenever she got on base, that definitely concerned us."

A walk, two wild pitches and a fielder's choice cut the Ross lead in half in the bottom of the fifth and the Fliers tied it on Hoffman's RBI single in the sixth.

In the Ross seventh, Zerman's single, another double by Pelfrey, a fielder's choice and a Clyde error accounted for two runs.

Pelfrey said she was playing a mental game with herself.

"Slow pitching always gets me," the Ross center fielder said.

## How they scored:

### ROSS FIFTH

Designated hitter April Benneman grounded out short to first and Emily Dowell flied to center. Dawn Zerman bunted for a base hit and stole second. Donna Steinberger was safe on roller down the first base with Zerman scoring from second when home plate was left uncovered. Steinberger continued to third on the throw to the unprotected plate and slid safely into third while knocking the ball out of third baseman Sara Oakleaf's glove.

Holly Pelfrey lined a double over leftfielder Mary Jo Hoffman, scoring Steinberger. Casey Schepflin grounded out short to first. **2 runs, 3 hits.**

### CLYDE FIFTH

Oakleaf led off with a walk. Amber Noftz struck out with Oakleaf moving to second on a wild pitch. Jessica Swartz grounded out short to first with Oakleaf moving to third. Kim Lawrence followed with her third hit, driving in Oakleaf. Lawrence was out attempting to steal second on catcher Nikki Pelfrey's throw to Zerman. **1 run, 1 hit.**

### CLYDE SIXTH

Kelly Emery singled and was sacrificed to second by Stacie Miller. Emery went to third on a passed ball and scored on Hoffman's single to right centerfield. Jill Butzin singled off Steinberger's glove in left. Amanda Hoffman and Oakleaf struck out. **1 run, 3 hits.**

### ROSS SEVENTH

Emily Dowell grounded out. Zerman faked a bunt and slapped a single to left. Zerman stole second and went to third as Steinberger grounded out pitcher to first. Holly Pelfrey doubled to left centerfield, scoring Zerman. Pelfrey scored from second when Schepflin was safe at first on Lawrence's throwing error. Jessica Rollins grounded out third to first. **2 runs, 2 hits.**

"I am eager; I am way ahead of it.

"Tonight, I put my bat on my shoulder more and in my head, I just said 'Wait.'"

Marshall, despite the loss, pointed out his team played well against a team that made it to

the regional finals last year.

"We were facing one of the better teams in the Northwest District," Marshall said. "I am pleased with the way the girls played. For as many balls as they put in play, we have us for only two errors."