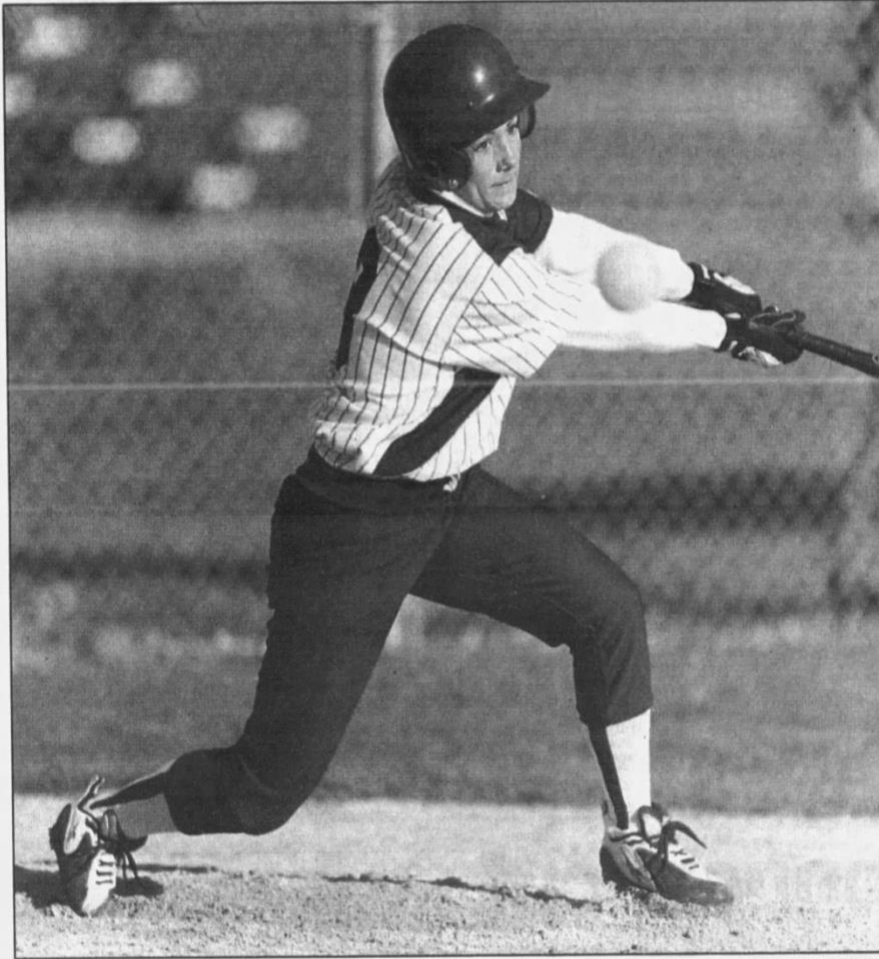


## Softball

# Ross drops opener 5-3



News-Messenger/Liz Margerum

JENN MIELKE of Ross fouls a pitch off during the first inning of Monday's game at Alumni Field in Fremont.

## BG rallies in seventh to top Ross; Genoa routs SJCC

News-Messenger reports

Bowling Green took advantage of some poor defense by Fremont Ross and handed the Little Giants a 5-3 non-league loss Monday at Alumni Field, in the season-opener for both teams.

The Bobcats took advantage of three Ross errors in the seventh inning and scored four runs to take the lead. Ross had taken a 2-1 lead in the bottom of the sixth on RBI singles by Ashleigh Horn and Krissy Lotycz.

Tiffany Nitschke was 2-

for-4 and Horn was 2-for-3 for Ross (0-1). Abby Gilbert, Allyson Hickey, Lotycz and Kristy Gabel added base hits for the Little Giants.

Courtney Abbott, who took the loss on the mound, drove in a run in the bottom of the seventh, but Bowling Green held on to win.

In other action Monday afternoon:

### Genoa 15, St. Joe 2

GENOA — Genoa collected 15 hits and rolled to a 15-2 non-league win over

St. Joe, in the season-opener for both teams.

Jenny Phillis was 4-for-4 with a home run and a triple for the Comets. Elaine Vonderembse also homered and drove in three runs. Kim Vogelpohl was 2-for-4 with a double for Genoa.

"It was a nice way to start the season," said Genoa coach Mark Cuthbertson. "Hopefully we can continue to hit the ball like that."

Drain pitched all seven innings for the victory, allowing two runs on four

hits. She walked one and struck out nine.

Marianne Fox tripled and doubled and Erin Raubenolt added a double for the Crimson Streaks. SJCC made four errors in the loss.

"Our errors hurt us," said SJCC coach Bill Bork.

"We're a young team with 2 seniors and the rest are sophomores. Young teams usually make errors."

SJCC will host Sandusky Perkins on Wednesday in another non-league game.

## **ROSS**

**Coach:** Mike Gilbert

**Key graduation losses:** OF Jenny Schaaf, OF Jodi Fick

**Key hitters:** C Abby Gilbert, 3B Tiffany Nitschke, SS Jenn Mielke, 2B Emily Bibler, 1B Allyson Hickey, RF Tiffany Garcia, CF Ainsley Watkins, LF Krissy Lotycz, P Courtney Abbott, DH Ashleigh Horn, OF Jenny Gabel, OF Kristy Gabel, DH Amanda Shaffer.

**Pitching staff:** Abbott, Mielke

**Outlook:** The Little Giants return seven of nine starters from last year, but the two players that graduated will be sorely missed. With Schaaf playing softball for the University of Toledo and Fick playing volleyball for Marshall, the Little Giants will have some big shoes to fill. But that doesn't mean there will be any shortage of power in the Ross lineup. The entire infield returns, led by Mielke, a three-year letterwinner, at shortstop. Hickey will play first, Bibler will play second and Nitschke will play third. The speedy Watkins will play centerfield again. She will be flanked by Garcia in right and Lotycz in left. In Abbott, the Little Giants have one of the Great Lakes League's best pitchers. She went 13-3 as a junior last year. The GLL is tough as usual, led by Clay, which only lost one senior, Bedford and Toledo Whitmer.

## **Abbott pitches Ross past 'Skins**

PORT CLINTON — Courtney Abbott pitched a complete game, striking out nine and yielding just three hits, as Fremont Ross posted a 5-1 softball victory over Port Clinton on Tuesday.

Tiffany Nitschke was 2-for-4 with an RBI and a stolen base. Jenny Mielke was 2-for-3 with three runs, three stolen bases and a double. Ashley Horn singled for Ross's other hit.

The Little Giants (1-1) travel to Margareta today for a non-league game.

■ See softball roundup, B4.

## **Softball**

---

**Ross 13, Margaretta 1**

CASTALIA — Fremont Ross collected 17 hits and pasted Margaretta in a non-league game.

Abby Gilbert was 3-for-5 with a run and three RBI for The Little Giants (2-1). Tiffany Nitschke was 3-for-5 with a pair of runs, Krissy Lotycz was 2-for-3 with three runs, Allyson Hickey was also 2-for-3, Ashleigh Horn was 2-for-5, Tiffany Garcia and Emily Bibler drove in two runs apiece, Ainsley Watkins had a hit and an RBI and Kristy Gabel drove in a run.

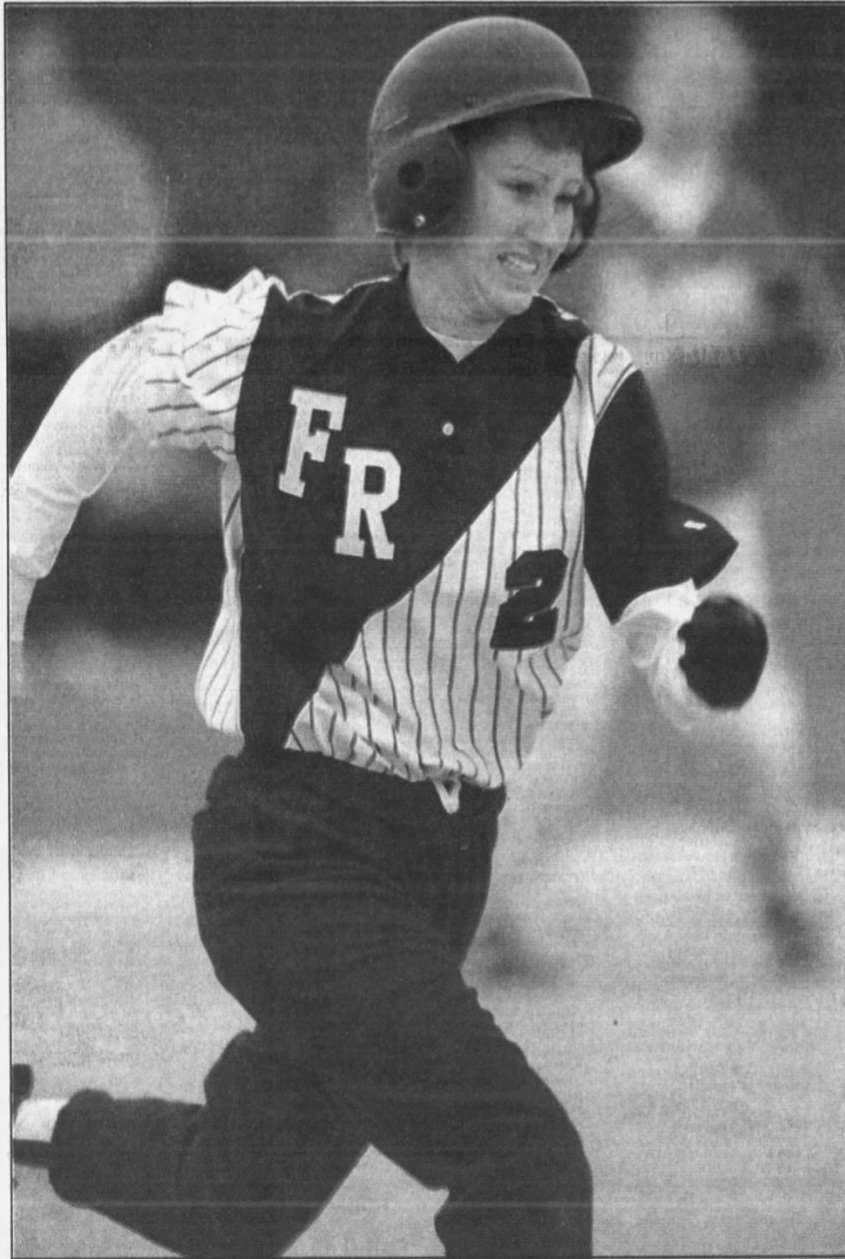
Courtney Abbott pitched seven innings for the win. She fanned six

and gave up three hits and a walk.

Ross hosts Toledo Central Catholic today.

# Little Giants play little ball

## Ross bunts, runs to victory over Toledo Central Catholic



TIFFANY NITSCHKE of the Ross softball team chugs toward first base after bunting in the first inning of Friday's game against Toledo Central Catholic. Nitschke was safe on the play as the Little Giants went on to win 13-2.

News-Messenger/Liz Margerum

**TIMOTHY R. WOLFRUM**  
Sports editor

The Fremont Ross softball team took little ball to the extreme early in Friday's 13-2, run-rule victory over perennial power Toledo Central Catholic.

The Little Giants scored three times and loaded the bases in the first inning before even hitting a ball past Irish pitcher Allison Schuster.

After Ross lead-off hitter Jen Mielke walked, Ainsley Watkins and Tiffany Nitschke laid down sacrifice bunts that were misplayed for errors by the TCC defense. An Allyson Hickey walk and an out later, Abby Gilbert bunted for a single, and Ashleigh Horn walked to load the bases.

Three in and three on and still no good contact.

"That's our game. That's the way we play," Ross coach Mike Gilbert said. "The kids can bunt. Our whole idea is to put pressure on the other team, especially in weather like this."

Kristy Lotycz then bounced a base hit into center field, and the Little Giants owned a 5-1 lead.

They never relinquished control. Friday's game started 35 minutes late because the TCC players arrived just after the 4:30 p.m. start time. As the game progressed, conditions went from brisk to raw to bone-chilling, the latter coinciding with a freezing drizzle.



See GIANTS, B4

### Lakota Track Invite postponed

KANSAS — The Lakota Track Invitational scheduled for today has been postponed and will be run at 3 p.m. Thursday, April 20.

Eight local schools — St. Joseph Central Catholic, Clyde, Woodmore, Oak Harbor, Bettsville, Old Fort, Margareta and Lakota — were scheduled to participate in the event.

# Giants run-rule Irish 13-2

Continued from B1

The Little Giants were fortunate. They closed out an eight-run fourth inning just in time to retire the Irish in the top of the fifth and earn the run-rule victory before a heavy rain doused the field. The game would not have been official if TCC had not batted in the fifth.

Ross is 3-1; TCC falls to 4-2.

"That was a big win for us. They're one of the top teams in Toledo," Gilbert said. "Fremont has a tradition in softball, but were just trying to get ready for the GLL season.

"They're just playing real well. The whole team is really close."

Courtney Abbott picked up the win on the mound for Ross. She allowed four hits and struck out three over five innings.

Nitschke led the eight-hit Ross attack with two infield singles. Mielke scored three runs, and Lotycz knocked in three more.

Ross did not commit an error on the game. Toledo Central Catholic committed seven.



News-Messenger/Liz Margerum

**AINSLEY WATKINS** reached base three times — twice on walks and once on an error — and scored a run as Ross run-ruled Central Catholic 13-2 Friday.



## Softball

---

### Ross 10, Fostoria 0

FOSTORIA — Courtney Abbott fired a two-hitter, and Fremont Ross collected 13 hits to pound Fostoria 10-0 in the Great Lakes League opener for both teams.

Abby Gilbert was 4-for-5 with two RBI to lead the Little Giants (4-1) to their fourth straight win. Tiffany Nitschke was 2-for-5 with two stolen bases, Emily Bibler was 2-for-4 with a double, Jenny Mielke doubled and drove in two runs, Allyson Hickey doubled and scored, Tiffany Garcia scored twice and Ashleigh Horn had a double, RBI and a run.

Ross opened the scoring in the third, as Bibler doubled and scored on an error. Mielke's double scored Gilbert and Horn to give Ross a 3-0 lead in the fourth. Hickey doubled in the fifth and scored on a Garcia single. Ross added three more in the sixth and two more in the seventh.

Abbott pitched seven innings, striking out eight, for the win. The biggest Fostoria threat came in the fourth, as ex-Woodmore stand-out Tracy Lee walked and Ashley Correll followed with an infield single. But Abbott fanned the final two hitters to end the threat.

# Abbott no-hits Panthers

News-Messenger reports

**TOLEDO** — Fremont Ross pitcher Courtney Abbott fired a no-hitter as the Little Giants whipped Toledo Whitmer 5-0 in the Great Lakes League Friday.

Abbott fanned six, walked none and did not allow a ball to be hit out of the infield. The only Panther baserunner reached on a throwing error by Abbott.

"Whitmer attempted several bunts to try to get something started," said Ross coach Mike Gilbert. "but it was thwarted each time by the defense."

Gilbert said Tiffany Nitschke, Jenny Mielke, Emily Bibler, Amanda Shaffer and Abby Gilbert led Ross's defensive performance.

Mielke was 4-for-5 with two RBI

## Softball

and a run for the Little Giants. Gilbert was 3-for-4, Ainsley Watkins was 2-for-4 with two RBI, Amanda Shaffer was 2-for-3, Ashleigh Horn was 2-for-4 with a run and Nitschke was 1-for-3.

Ross is 5-1 overall and 2-0 in the GLL. Whitmer is 2-1 in the league.

The Little Giants host Sandusky on Monday in another GLL game.

## Elmwood 13, Woodmore 5

**BLOOMDALE** — The Wildcats outhit Elmwood 10-6 but committed nine errors in the SLL loss to the Royals.

Krista Kelley and Melissa Arndt both doubled and singled and Nicole McCarthy went 3-for-4 with

one RBI for Woodmore, 1-9 and 0-5 in the SLL.

## Oak Harbor 3, Huron 0

**HURON** — Katie Green gave up three hits and Paula Orshoski hit a two-run double in the third inning, leading Oak Harbor to a 3-0 Sandusky Bay Conference softball victory over Huron.

Green (2-2) struck out nine and walked six as the Rockets ran their record to 6-4 and 3-0 in the Sandusky Bay Conference.

Oak Harbor has yet to yield a run in SBC wins over Huron, Edison and Port Clinton.

Stacey Diefenthaler went 2-for-3 and drove in a run for the Rockets.

Huron dropped to 4-4 and 1-2 in the SBC.

# Abbott fires second straight no-hitter

Ross blanks rival Sandusky

By MICHAEL PIDANICK  
Staff writer

Fremont Ross pitcher Courtney Abbott said she didn't have her best stuff Tuesday afternoon. Don't bother telling that to Sandusky.

The Little Giants' pitcher dominated the Blue Streaks en route to her second consecutive no-hitter, as Ross blanked Sandusky 8-0 at Alumni Field.

"I really wasn't on today," Abbott said. "My change wasn't working, my riseball

was off. The defense really stood out and did the job."

Kelly McCormick drew a first-inning walk and was the only Blue Streak to reach base. She was called out for leaving too soon, and Abbott retired the final 18 Blue Streaks in order.

Abbott fanned 13 and held a Great Lakes League foe hitless for the second time in five days. On Friday she no-hit Whitmer in a 5-0 win in Toledo.

"That's pretty nice," said Ross coach Mike Gilbert. "She's 6-1 and we're 6-1, so that tells you how important she is. I'm real pleased that we

were errorless. I think that really helps Courtney out there, knowing she can let them hit it."

Sandusky's Dana Wobser came the closest to getting a hit off Abbott. In the top of the second, she lined a shot that deflected off Abbott's glove. But shortstop Jenny Mielke scooped it up and threw to first in plenty of time.

The Blue Streaks, who were without several starters because of spring break vacations, fell to 1-7 with the loss.

"We did OK with a

## Softball

makeshift lineup," said Sandusky coach Clyde Green. "But you can't win games if you don't get any runs or hits."

Sandusky starter Dana Wobser kept the Little Giants off balance with some nasty off speed pitches, and allowed just five hits.

The Blue Streaks played equal to the Little Giants in every inning except the third. In that frame, the Little Giants took advantage of four walks and an error, and plated six runs. Ross only had two hits in the inning, but they were big ones, as Krissy Lotycz delivered a two-run double and Abby Gilbert drove in another

run with a bunt basehit.

"She did a nice job," Green said of Wobser. "Except for that third inning, when we had a few walks and then they got some hits, we played with them. They have some big sticks in the lineup, to hold them to five hits isn't bad."

Ross opened the scoring in the bottom of the first, as Mielke opened with a triple to left and scored on an RBI groundout by Kristy Gabel. Emily Bibler scored Ross's final run on a sixth inning wild pitch.

A double by Ashleigh Horn and a single by Tiffany Nitschke accounted for Ross's

**Inside:** Ross baseball tops Sandusky 9-4. **Page B3**

other two hits.

"We just didn't hit the ball," coach Gilbert said. "We've been hitting the ball, I guess it just wasn't our day. Sometimes it's harder to hit a slower pitcher like that when you're used to heat."

The Little Giants look to keep rolling today, as Findlay comes to Alumni Field for another GLL game. As for Abbott, she will aim for her third consecutive no-hitter.

"It would be nice," she said with a smile.



# Abbott strikes again

## Little Giant tosses 3rd straight no-hitter, just misses perfection

By **TIMOTHY R. WOLFRUM**  
Sports editor

The Ross softball team has proven it can keep the opposition from scoring, a notion driven home again Wednesday when pitcher Courtney Abbott picked up her third consecutive no-hitter.

But the Ross bats almost dropped the ball, waiting until the final inning to put away the Findlay Trojans and pitcher Jennifer Kuhlman 1-



**ABBOTT**

0 at Alumni Field.

In the bottom of the seventh, the Little Giants turned to the girl whose only job is to hit.

She delivered.

Designated hitter Ashleigh Horn scalded a one-out double down the right-field line,

and pinch-runner Kristy Gabel later scored the winning run on Jen Mielke's bloop single.

"I stepped up and I was confident," Horn said. "I didn't think it was going to go that far. I knew Kristy would get around the bases."

Ross is 7-1, 4-0 in the Great Lakes League. Findlay falls to 2-7, 2-3 in the GLL.

Ross's 11th-hour run — the Little Giants managed only

four hits — put the finishing touch on another Abbott gem. The junior ace struck out 11, walked none and faced 21 batters, the minimum.

Findlay's Monica Munsey was the only Findlay base runner. She reached on a second-inning error by Abbott, who fielded Munsey's bunt and threw it past first baseman Allyson Hickey.

See **ABBOTT, B2**

# Abbott pitches another no-hitter

**Continued from B1**

Munsey was later erased at the plate in a rundown after Ross catcher Abby Gilbert caught her straying off third base. Abbott retired the final 17 Findlay batters.

In the past five games, the Little Giants have committed two errors, both by Abbott. A similar error against Whitmer cost Abbott a perfect game in the contest that started the no-hitter streak.

"I can't imagine the girls playing any better," Ross coach Mike Gilbert said. "We know they're going to have to swing the bat and hit the ball. She (Abbott) has confidence in her defense because they've been making plays behind her. They did again."

"I told her, 'If you're going to mess up a perfect game, Courtney, you might as well do it yourself.'"

Abbott has yet to give up a run in GLL play, and all three of her no-hitters have come against league foes.

But the Trojans' Kuhlman was a formidable foe. She worked out of two-on jams in the first and third innings and held the Little Giants at bay until the seventh. Kuhlman struck out three and walked four.

"Fremont always has a good hitting team," Findlay coach Kevin Haught said. "She came down and shut them down for 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> innings, and that's all we can ask of her."

In the seventh, Horn's double started the rally. Horn agreed with Gilbert's decision to pinch-run Gabel for her: "I'm so slow. I'm one of the slowest on the team. Everybody knows that."

Then, with Ross's Krissy Lotycz at the plate, Haught elected to have Kuhlman attempt an intentional walk.

But on the second pitch, the ball got away from the Findlay catcher, allowing Gabel to advance to third with only one out.

"That's something we certainly need to work on in practice," Haught said of the intentional walk. "I would have liked to have them on first and second and see what would come of the pinch-hitter."

After Lotycz finally walked, Ross pinch-hitter Amanda Shaffer bunted and Findlay elected to hold on to the ball and not risk allowing Gabel to score.

Then Mielke ended the game with her second hit of the day, a bloop over the shortstop's head.

"It was a total team effort tonight," Gilbert said. "Everybody on this bench contributed. ... That's why this team is good. This was a character builder."

Ross is at Napoleon today.

## Abbott no-hits Norwalk in Ross sweep

News-Messenger reports

Courtney Abbott twirled her fourth consecutive no-hitter, and teammate Jenny Mielke added a one-hitter as the Ross softball team pasted Norwalk in a doubleheader Saturday at Alumni Field.

The Little Giants won by scores of 20-1 and 27-1, and both games were decided by the run rule in five innings. Ross (9-1) has won nine consecutive games.

In the first game Saturday,

**Inside:** Ross tennis wins doubles tourney. **Page B3**

Abbott struck out eight and raised her record to 8-1. She has thrown 26 consecutive innings without giving up a hit. Mielke won her first game of the season by surrendering only one hit and a run and striking out five in the nightcap.

Tiffany Nitschke was the offensive star in the first

game. She went 3-for-4 with two doubles, three runs scored and three runs batted in. Mielke scored three times as well.

The Little Giants led 10-1 entering the bottom of the fourth then scored 10 runs in the inning to bring the game to a quick halt.

In the second game, Mielke helped herself by going 3-for-4 with a pair of doubles and three runs scored. Ainsley Watkins was 2-for-3 and

scored twice; Nitschke had two more hits, scored twice and drove in three; Krissy Lotycz had two hits, including a double, scored twice and had two RBI; and Amanda Shaffer went 2-for-3 with three runs scored.

Ross scored eight runs in the first inning, 13 in the second and six in the third. Norwalk committed four errors in the second game.

The Little Giants are at Clay today.

### **Clay 3, Ross 2**

**OREGON** — Oregon Clay handed Fremont Ross its first Great Lakes League loss of the season with a 3-2 nine-inning win and ended Courtney Abbott's no-hitter streak at four games in the process.

Clay scored in the bottom of the ninth on a bases-loaded single. Ainsley Watkins was 3-for-3 with an RBI and a run for the Little Giants.

Abbott — who no-hit Toledo Whitmer, Sandusky, Findlay and Norwalk in her last four starts — gave up six hits and three runs, one of which was earned.

Ross is 9-2, 5-1.

## Softball

# Ross kicks Mules



News-Messenger/Doug Hise

**TIFFANY NITSCHKE** of Ross tags out a Bedford runner at third base to complete a game-ending double play in the Little Giants' 3-1 win over the Kicking Mules Wednesday at Alumni Field. With runners on second and third and one out, Mielke made a diving backhand catch of a line drive at shortstop and threw to Nitschke for the game-ending double play.

## Little Giants score three in first, hold off Bedford in seventh

News-Messenger reports

Fremont Ross got back on the winning track with a 3-1 Great Lakes League win over Bedford (Mich.) Wednesday at Alumni Field.

Ross bounced back from Monday's GLL loss to Oregon Clay, and improved to 10-2 overall and 5-1 in the league.

Courtney Abbott pitched all seven innings for the win. She yielded one run and three hits and struck out three. She is 9-2 on the season.

Jenny Mielke, Ainsley Watkins, Krissy Lotycz, Kristy Gabel and Emily Bibler singled for Ross.

The Little Giants scored three times in the bottom of the first to take command of the game. Mielke opened with a single, stole second

and moved to third on a single by Watkins. Abby Gilbert's sacrifice bunt drove in Mielke and Watkins scored on an error.

Gilbert scored Ross's third run of the inning on Ashleigh Horn's sacrifice bunt.

Abbott, who has four no-hitters this season, held the Kicking Mules hitless until the fifth.

Bedford rallied in the top of the seventh, when it scored its lone run.

But with runners on second and third and one out, Mielke made a diving backhand catch of a line drive at shortstop and threw to third baseman Tiffany Nitschke for the game-ending double play.

Ross hosts Fostoria on Friday in another GLL game.



News-Messenger/Doug Hise

**COURTNEY ABBOTT** gave up one run and three hits in Ross's win.

## Softball

---

Janelle Dangler tripled in the win. Kelley said third baseman Erin Deal, shortstop Leah Strong, second baseman Shawna Arndt and first baseman Nicole McCarthy led a good team defensive effort.

Emily Drain walked one and struck out eight for the Genoa.

### Gibsonburg 13, Otsego 0

GIBSONBURG — Jamie Wonderly threw a three-hit shutout and was 3-for-4 at the plate as Gibsonburg drilled Otsego in the SLL.

Wonderly singled, doubled and tripled for the Golden Bears (12-1, 7-1). Megan Wassil had two doubles for Gibsonburg.

Kris Schultz took the loss for Otsego.

### Ross 8, Fostoria 1

Fremont Ross collected 13 hits and pounded Fostoria in the Great Lakes League.

Jenny Mielke, Ainsley Watkins, Abby Gilbert, Ashleigh Horn, Tiffany Nitschke and Tiffany Garcia had two hits apiece for the Little Giants.

Courtney Abbott was the winning pitcher. She yielded one run and four hits over seven innings.

### Clyde 21, Port Clinton 6

CLYDE — Katey Nieset and Heather Kwiatkowski both homered as Clyde thumped Port Clinton in the Sandusky Bay Conference.

Rachel Dick got the win on the mound for the Fliers.

### Old Fort 15, Wynford 4

OLD FORT — Erin Rau had three hits, including two doubles, and picked up the victory on the mound as the Stockaders took care of Wynford.

Old Fort (10-3) pounded out 16 hits and did not commit an error.

Rosy Ortiz had two doubles, and Rachel McCullough and Jenny Seigley had two hits apiece for the Stockaders.



# Royals oust Woodmore in sectional opener 6-3

News-Messenger reports

WOODVILLE — Janelle Dangler went 4-for-4 for Woodmore, but the Wildcats dropped a 6-3 decision to Elmwood in a Division III sectional semifinal.

Second-seeded Elmwood (13-2) scored twice in the bottom of the sixth to blow open what had been a 4-3 game. Woodmore (4-12) did not score in the seventh.

Cori Moenter took the loss for the Wildcats. She struck out seven and walked one.

April Bills went 3-for-4 and scored twice for the Royals, who advance to meet Northwood at 5 p.m. Thursday in the sectional final.

In other Division III sectional action at Woodmore:

Cardinal Stritch (11-1) scored five runs in the fourth and seven more in the sixth to overcome an early deficit and defeat Danbury (3-11) 12-4. The Cardinals will meet top-seeded Gibsonburg at 5 p.m. Tuesday.

Northwood took advantage of six Toledo Christian errors to win 15-8 and advance to meet Elmwood.

## Softball

Hopewell-Loudon 17, Bettsville 0  
OLD FORT — Hopewell-Loudon out-hit Bettsville 19-1 in an easy Division III sectional semifinal win at Old Fort High School.

Jessica Vallejo had the only Bobcats' hit. Charlene Soto took the loss on the mound.

Ross 7, Ashland 0

Kristy Gabel and Emily Bibler each went 3-for-3 Saturday as Ross defeated Lorain Southview 7-0 in regular-season action.

Gabel scored twice and Bibler added a run and an RBI as the Little Giants improved to 12-2.

Ross pitcher Courtney Abbott twirled a three-hit shutout and struck out 12. She is 11-2.

The Little Giants scored two runs in the bottom of the first when Abby Gilbert singled in Jenny Mielke and Tiff Nitschke doubled in Gilbert. In the fourth, Ainsley Watkins singled and brought Krissy Lotczyk, Gabel and Bibler in to score. In the fifth, Bibler scored Lotczyk with a single, and Gabel scored on a Southview error.

Ross meets Ashland at 5 p.m. today in the Division I sectional tournament at Alumni Field.

SJCC 6-9, PC 2-1

PORT CLINTON — Marianne Fox and Heather Smith each had two hits and scored two runs in each game as St. Joseph Central Catholic swept Port Clinton in a non-league doubleheader.

Fox homered was 2-for-2 with a home run in the first game as SJCC won 6-1 and went 2-for-3 with a double in the second game, a 9-1 Crimson Streaks win. Smith had four hits and two RBI on the day. Alisha Bork was 2-for-4 in the first game, while Rachel Fisher had two hits in the second game.

Amy Strausbaugh was the first-game winner, as she held the Redskins to one run on three hits. Jenny Bork was the winner in the second game, as she yielded just two hits and one earned run on the mound, while going 2-for-3 with two RBI at the plate.

SJCC opens tournament action against St. Wendelin in a sectional semifinal at 5 p.m. today at Old Fort High School.

## Little Giants play today, Streaks on Thursday

News-Messenger reports

Monday's heavy rains washed away four area sectional tournament games, including contests involving the Fremont Ross and St. Joseph Central Catholic softball teams.

The Little Giants will try again at 5 p.m. today to get in their Division I sectional game against Ashland at

Alumni Field. Tiffin Columbian and Mansfield will also play at 5 p.m. today at Ross. The winners will still meet at 5 p.m. Thursday.

St. Joe is scheduled to play Fostoria St. Wendelin in a Division III sectional softball game at 5 p.m. Thursday at Old Fort High School.

Among other area teams, the Old Fort and Bettsville baseball teams had their Division IV sectional game postponed Monday and will try again at 5 p.m. Thursday at Old Fort. And the Margaretta softball team had its Division II sectional game against Perkins postponed. Information on a make-up

date was unavailable Monday.

Today's tournament slate features a Division II sectional final baseball game between Clyde and top-seed Bellevue at 5 p.m. at Perkins High School and a Division III sectional final softball game between No. 1 seed Gibsonburg and Cardinal Stritch at 5 p.m. at Woodville.

### Today's tourney schedule

#### BASEBALL

Division II at Perkins H.S.  
Clyde vs. Bellevue, 5 p.m.

#### SOFTBALL

Division I at Ross H.S.  
Ross vs. Ashland, 5 p.m.  
Division II at Genoa  
Port Clinton vs. Bellevue, 5 p.m.  
Division III at Woodville  
Stritch vs. Gibsonburg, 5 p.m.



# Giants, Bears, Raiders continue winning ways

News-Messenger reports

Jenny Mielke tripled in two runs as Ross stayed hot with a 4-1 Great Lakes League victory over Whitmer on Wednesday.

The Little Giants (14-2, 7-1 GLL) broke a 1-1 tie in the bottom of the third when Tiff Nitschke scored Ainsley Watkins with a single. Mielke's triple scored Amanda Shaffer and Emily Bibler took give Ross some breathing room in the fourth.

Courtney Abbott picked up her 13th victory by allowing four hits and striking out two. Abbott no-hit Whitmer in the first meeting between the two teams.

The Giants scored first in the second inning when Allyson Hickey tripled for the second consecutive night then scored on a Kristy Gabel groundout.

Ross meets Tiffin Columbian in the Division I sectional final at 5 p.m. today at Alumni Field.

**Gibsonburg 6, Cardinal Stritch 3**

OREGON — The Golden Bears beat the Cardinals for the second night in a

## Softball

row behind Heather Hill's three hits.

Gibsonburg (14-1) defeated Stritch (11-3) in a sectional game Tuesday.

Jamie Wonderly got the win for the Bears. Hill doubled twice, Megan Wassil went 2-for-3 and Angela Ruiz went 2-for-4.

Gibsonburg hosts Woodmore on Friday.

**Lakota 12, Woodmore 0**

WOODVILLE — The Raiders scored six times in the first inning and cruised behind the two-hit shutout pitching of Ashley Lockmiller.

Jamie Ray went 4-for-5 for Lakota (12-4, 5-4 Suburban Lakes League). Renee Cheney had two hits and three RBI, and Kristen Lentz had two hits.

Lockmiller struck out 14 and walked just one. Cori Moenter took the defeat for Woodmore.

Woodmore is at Gibsonburg on Friday, while Lakota faces Norwalk in a Division II sectional game at Genoa.

## **Ross 15, Sandusky 0**

**SANDUSKY** — Jenny Mielke fired a one-hitter as Fremont Ross blanked Sandusky in six innings.

Mielke delivered three RBI with a double at the plate for the Little Giants.

Amanda Shaffer was 3-for-3 with three RBI, Kristy Gabel was 2-for-2 and Tiffany Garcia, Tiff Nitschke, Emily Bibler, Allyson Hickey and Krissy Lotycz also had hits for the Little Giants (15-3).

Dana Wobster took the loss for the Blue Streaks.

# Abbott no-hits Trojans again

News-Messenger reports

FINDLAY — Courtney Abbott has done it again.

The Little Giants senior pitcher fired her fifth no-hitter of the season — including her second against rival Findlay — as Ross beat the Trojans 2-0 in a Great Lakes League game on Monday.

## Prep Softball

Abbott did not walk a batter. The Little Giants made one error, accounting for the only Findlay base runner, but made several excellent plays to back up Abbott's pitching, said Ross coach Mike Gilbert.

Ross opened the scoring in the third, as Kristy Gabel doubled, went to third on a sacrifice by Allyson Hickey and scored on a wild pitch. The Little Giants scored again in the sixth, as Ainsley Watkins walked, went to second on a passed ball, stole third and scored on a wild pitch.

Ross (17-3, 9-1) will play Oregon Clay at 4:30 p.m. Wednesday in its home finale, looking for a share of the GLL title.

## Ross softball gets past Elmwood

Courtney Abbott hurled a three-hit shutout Saturday as the Ross softball team defeated Elmwood 4-0.

Abbott struck out nine and improved to 14-3. The Little Giants are 16-3.

Abby Gilbert, Jenny Mielke and Ainsley Watkins drove in runs for Ross.

# Ross controls destiny in GLL

Giants can clinch  
title tie with victory  
Friday at Bedford

By TIMOTHY R. WOLFRUM  
Sports Editor

As it should be in the final home game of the season, the seniors starred Wednesday for the Fremont Ross softball team.

But a junior shortstop and a former Little Giant played important supporting roles as Ross defeated rival Oregon Clay 3-2 to move into a tie for first place in the Great Lakes League.

---

**Inside:** Gibsonburg falls in pursuit of SLL title. **Page B2**

---

Senior pitcher Courtney Abbott held the Eagles at bay after a rough first inning and classmate Ainsley Watkins rapped a double that put the Little Giants ahead for good.

Backing the seniors, though, were Jenny Mielke, the junior shortstop who made one dazzling play and was steady throughout in support of Abbott, and Jenny Schaaf, a 1999 graduate and current University of Toledo player who Watkins pulled out of the stands for a batting tip prior to her second-inning at-bat.

"I said, 'Jenny, what am I doing wrong?' She said to keep my elbow up and stay loose," said Watkins, who struck out in her first at-bat but later slammed a double deep to left to knock home the go-ahead run.

"The first pitch was high, so I let it go. But the second pitch was there so I just swung. I didn't watch it. I just said, 'Please fall.'"

Wednesday's victory means Ross (18-3, 10-1) can clinch a tie for the GLL title with a victory in its final game Friday at Bedford. Clay (13-4, 8-1) has three league games to play.

---

See LITTLE GIANTS, B2

# Little Giants take care of Clay in six seniors' final game at Alumni Field

Continued from B1

The Eagles, who defeated Ross 3-2 in nine innings on April 24, jumped ahead 2-0 in the top of the first Wednesday, but the Giants rallied with all three of their runs and both of their hits in the bottom of the second and made it stand up.

"I guess it shows the character of this team," Ross coach Mike Gilbert said. "These kids never quit. There may be better athletes, but I don't think there are much better teams. That's a tribute to our six seniors."

Clay's Shannon McDougle dou-

bled home Megan Beshalske with the Eagles' first tally. Then, with two outs and McDougle on third, Abbott fielded a one-hopper and fired it over the head of Ross first baseman Allyson Hickey, allowing McDougle to score.

After that, the Ross defense was impenetrable. The play of the game came from Mielke, who dived to her right to snare a line drive off the bat of Jenny St. John to start the fourth inning.

Mielke ended a fifth-inning Clay rally by fielding a hard-hit grounder, then made three straight plays to retire the Eagles in the

sixth. Fittingly, the game ended on a short pop to Mielke.

"She's a nice player," Clay coach Jeff Lee said of Mielke. "She's solid defensively. That's what they expect out of her, and she delivered."

Ross responded in the second. After Clay pitcher Emile Ondrus retired the first two hitters of the frame, Tiffany Garcia and Hickey drew walks. Then, ninth-hitter Emily Bibler lofted an 8-2 pitch into right-center field for a hit to score Garcia and move Hickey to third.

"If you want to put a clutch hit

down, you've got to give it to Bibler," Gilbert said. "She's struggled offensively this year, but she believed in herself."

Hickey later scored when St. John, the Clay catcher, tried to pick her off third base and threw the ball into left field. After Mielke walked, Watkins drilled a 1-0 pitch well over the head of Clay leftfielder Dana Guerrero. Hickey scored Ross's third run of the inning, but Mielke was thrown out at the plate.

But it was too little, too late for the Eagles.

"That's been our case lately, lack of focus," Lee said. "It happened in

our tournament game, and it cost us a league title. When you play against a good team, you've got to come ready to play."

Watkins said Wednesday's victory helped the Little Giants heal from a tough sectional defeat at the hands of Tiffin Columbian last Thursday.

"I didn't care who got the hit, as long as someone did," Watkins said. "It makes us feel a lot better. We could have gone far in the tournament, but the GLL's our goal now."

Ross wraps up the season Friday at Bedford.

## Junior varsity Giants pull off big comeback

The Ross junior varsity softball team scored four runs in the bottom of the seventh inning on the way to a 4-3 victory over Clay on Wednesday.

The Little Giants were being no-hit before Jenny Vassar led off the seventh with a single. After four walks, Meghan Michaels bunted for a single and Jodi Menkhoff singled in the winning runs.

Ross is 21-1 and can clinch the Great Lakes League title outright with a win at Bedford on Friday.

---

# **All-Great Lakes**

---

## **SOFTBALL**

### **First Team**

Emily Ondrus (Clay) Courtney Abbott (Ross), Jenny St. John (Clay), Shannon McDougale (Clay), Tracy Lee (Fostoria), Jessica Zobaib (Bedford), Megan Beshalske (Clay), Sarah Fleming (Fostoria), Stacy Goulding (Whitmer), Erica Anderson (Clay), Ashleigh Horn (Ross), Ashley Kuhlman (Findlay).

### **Second Team**

Krista Kreinbrink (Bedford), Jennifer Kuhlman (Findlay), Abby Gilbert (Ross), Kayla Kistner (Whitmer), Tara Dunnigan (Bedford), Shellie Andrzejewski (Clay), Jenn Mielke (Ross), Krisitn Albring (Bedford), Jillian Broadway (Clay), Danielle LaFountain (Findlay), Darcie Correll (Fostoria), Amanda Shaffer (Ross).

### **Honorable Mention**

Fremont Ross: Tiffany Nitschke, Emily Bibler, Ainsley Watkins, Allyson Hickey

Player of the Year: Courtney Abbott, Ross

Coach of the Year: Mike Gilbert, Ross



## **Ross softball gets share of GLL crown**

**BEDFORD** — Fremont Ross clinched a share of the Great Lakes League softball crown by crushing Bedford 11-1 Friday in its season finale.

The Little Giants lead the GLL, but are tied in the loss column with Oregon Clay, which has two league games left.

Ashleigh Horn was 3-for-3 with two runs, Tiffany Nitschke was 2-for-3 with a run and an RBI and Jennifer Mielke drove in two runs and scored two more for the Little Giants (19-3, 11-1).

Courtney Abbott was the winning pitcher. She gave up three hits and no earned runs, while fanning six.

---

# **All-Great Lakes**

---

## **SOFTBALL**

### **First Team**

Emily Ondrus (Clay) Courtney Abbott (Ross), Jenny St. John (Clay), Shannon McDougale (Clay), Tracy Lee (Fostoria), Jessica Zobaib (Bedford), Megan Beshalske (Clay), Sarah Fleming (Fostoria), Stacy Goulding (Whitmer), Erica Anderson (Clay), Ashleigh Horn (Ross), Ashley Kuhlman (Findlay).

### **Second Team**

Krista Kreinbrink (Bedford), Jennifer Kuhlman (Findlay), Abby Gilbert (Ross), Kayla Kistner (Whitmer), Tara Dunnigan (Bedford), Shellie Andrzejewski (Clay), Jenn Mielke (Ross), Krisitn Albring (Bedford), Jillian Broadway (Clay), Danielle LaFountain (Findlay), Darcie Correll (Fostoria), Amanda Shaffer (Ross).

### **Honorable Mention**

Fremont Ross: Tiffany Nitschke, Emily Bibler, Ainsley Watkins, Allyson Hickey

Player of the Year: Courtney Abbott, Ross

Coach of the Year: Mike Gilbert, Ross

# Abbott: Potential realized

## Ross softball ace had to be convinced of talent

By TIMOTHY R. WOLFRUM  
Sports editor

Sometimes coaches know best. What better way to explain the softball career of Ross pitcher Courtney Abbott, who turned in one of the most memorable seasons in school history after initially resisting her calling to the mound.

"I never thought I'd be a pitcher," Abbott recalled Monday as rain fell outside the Ross dugout at the softball field.

"My ninth-grade year, coach (Cheryl) Schell said, 'I want you to pitch.' I didn't really want to. But I'm glad I did now."

Abbott didn't really want to pitch as a 12-year-old for coach Mike Gilbert's Fremont Recreation Department team, the Mustangs, either.

But fortunately for the Little Giant program, the lanky right-hander listened when her coaches insisted she had potential.

She endured the marathon pre-season workouts at "The Wall," the concrete target at the middle school where budding Ross hurlers throw as many as 500 pitches per day. And she kept at it even when Schell gently pulled her ponytail to keep Abbott from leaning forward during her delivery.

The coaches, meanwhile, saw a perfect pitcher in Abbott's tall, thin form. "She had long arms, long legs," said Schell, who headed the Ross program from 1992-98. "That plays to the advantage of a pitcher. You can't beat natural leverage."

Gilbert, who succeeded Schell as the varsity coach two years ago, knew from those recreation days that Abbott could make a fine pitcher.

His task was convincing her. "She had a good attitude and a willingness to work," Gilbert said. "Plus, she was tall. I always like tall pitchers."

"She didn't want to pitch at first, but I always saw her as a pitcher," Gilbert and Schell were right.

That's why Abbott, who threw four consecutive no-hitters this season while leading Ross to a 19-3 record and a second consecutive Great Lakes League softball co-championship, is one of six high school athletes to be honored as The News-Messenger's Athletes of the Year.

The News-Messenger will profile the other five honorees over the next five editions, culminating in the Michael K. Bosi Athlete of the Year Award on Tuesday.

**Swimming taught dedication**  
Abbott also excelled for the Ross swim team. She was a two-time district qualifier as a freestyler. As a junior, she went to district with the 200- and 400-yard

### Getting to know ...

#### Courtney Abbott

**School:** Ross.  
**Sports:** Swimming, softball.  
**Honors:** GLL Player of Year, All-Ohio honorable mention, All-Northwest District first team.

#### Personal

■ **Parents:** Russ and Ellen Abbott.  
■ **Brothers/Sisters:** Twins Jessica and Jennifer, 16; Michael, 12.  
■ **Favorite Food:** Italian.  
■ **Favorite Movie:** *A League of Their Own*.  
■ **Favorite Athlete:** Michelle Smith, USA softball pitcher.

#### Credentials

**Softball**  
■ **Career pitching record:** 30-6.  
■ **Last season:** 17-3, 0.56 earned-run average, 148 strikeouts, 14 walks, four consecutive no-hitters.  
■ **Single-season school records:** No-hitters (five), strikeouts (148), fewest walks (14) and shutouts (tied with eight).

**Swimming**  
■ **Qualified for district in four events:** 50- and 100-yard freestyle and 200- and 400-yard freestyle relays.  
■ **Missed by one place of qualifying for state in 200-yard freestyle relay.**

freestyle relay teams. This past year, she qualified in four events, the two relays as well as the 50- and 100-yard individual events. The 400 relay team of Abbott, Morgan and Brittany O'Connor and Sarah Berger set the school record at district and the same team missed a state berth by one place in the 200 relay.

Abbott said swimming taught her about hard work.

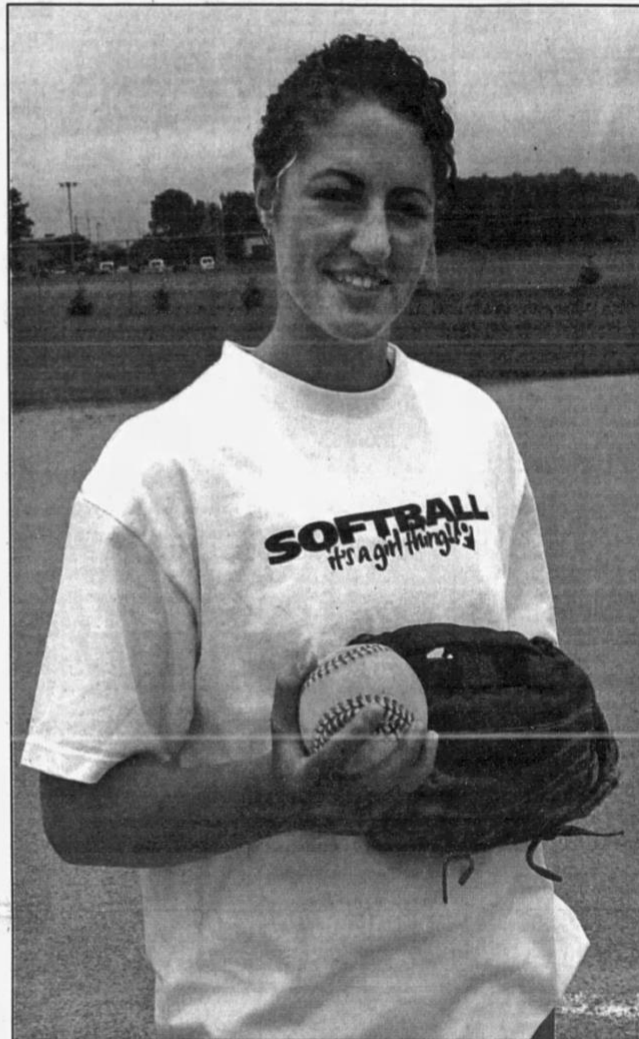
"I'll remember it as very hard, 5-in-the-morning practices and two-hour practices after school," Abbott said. "It takes a lot of dedication."

"I really liked swimming, and I just stuck with it. I don't really like to quit anything."

#### A record-setting season

But Abbott made her biggest mark on the softball field. This year's GLL Player of the Year and an honorable mention All-Ohio selection, she finished her two-year

See ABBOTT, B2



News-Messenger/Ben French

COURTNEY ABBOTT set Ross softball records for no-hitters, strikeouts and fewest walks this season. She led the Little Giants to a 19-3 record and a second straight Great Lakes League title.

## Nothing beats beating Clay

By TIMOTHY R. WOLFRUM  
Sports editor

### Memorable Moment

Courtney Abbott pitched five no-hitters this season for the Ross softball team, but none of them could compare to the unmitigated joy that came from vanquishing a heated rival.

Abbott said beating the much-despised Oregon Clay softball team was the highlight of her high school career.

Fortunately for her, she got to experience it twice.

During Abbott's two years as Ross's ace pitcher, the Little Giants split four games with the Eagles, beating them 3-2 at home this season and 10-1 on the road last year. The two teams

tied for the Great Lakes League crown both years.

It's not clear why the Clay and Ross teams hold each other in such low regard. Abbott said it may have something to do with the league race, which usually finds the Eagles and Little Giants near the top.

"We don't like them; they don't like us," Abbott said. "It's always been us and them trying for the league. That's the way that started."

The Little Giants especially enjoyed the victory at Oregon last year. The Ross players rev-

eled in watching an enraged Clay coach Jeff Lee react to the pounding.

According to Abbott, the best moment came when Ross designated hitter Ashleigh Horn waltzed home safely from third on what she mistakenly thought was a bases-loaded walk.

The startled Eagles let her score unmolested.

"I remember Ashleigh just walked home," Abbott said. "She wasn't forced or anything, she just walked home. Their coach just got so mad. That was a really funny moment."

"I remember the coach being so mad. He was yelling at them a lot that game."



### Coming Thursday:

The News-Messenger's profiles of the area's six Athletes of the Year continue with a story on Gibsonburg High School golfer and basketball standout Jeremiah Diebler.