

Pitching and defense key

Deep rotation, slick gloves give Little Giants hope

BY KEVIN SHIELDS
Sports Writer

FREMONT — Pitching and defense can go a long way in high school baseball.

Fremont Ross coach Mark King hopes both components can lead his Little Giants to a Greater Buckeye Conference title in 2010.

After finishing second in the GBC standings, with identical records of 12-13 and 6-4 in King's first two years as skipper, Ross may finally be built for a title run in year three. And it could start with its arms, instead of its bats.

Graduation took some pop out of the Little Giants batting order, as the offense will have some early season question marks. But King's defense should be a strong point — mainly due to the return of his entire starting rotation on the hill.

"We don't have a guy that's going to throw 90 miles per hour and blow away a lineup, but what we have is depth," King said. "If we have a guy that's off, we can just run another guy out."

Heading King's rotation is senior Dexter Foos. However, Cameron Hord is just as capable of owning the Little Giant's role of ace, and could take it away.

"Dexter is a little more of a power pitcher," King said. "Then Hord has a nice breaking pitch, a nice change-up and gets the ball down. I'm not sure yet who is No. 1 and who is No. 2, it's a right-handed and left-handed look though."

Either way, the duo, plus senior Cory Rohrbacher and junior Allen Lewis, make up, arguably, the GBC's top staff.

Foos (5-4, 3.75 ERA), who had 41 strikeouts a year ago, was named to both the second team all-GBC squad and the second team all-district club. Hord had a strong start and finished last season, but was hampered by an injury to his planting foot.

King says Hord has looked



News-Messenger file photo

Cameron Hord pitches during a game last season. The lefty will be counted on as one of the anchors to the Ross pitching staff.

good off the mound from a good off-season workout regime. The same can be said about Rohrbacher, slated to be the third guy in the Little Giant rotation.

"We got some quality innings from Cory last season," King said. "He's been looking really good so far this season off the mound."

Whoever is on the Ross hill, will be backed up by a solid bullpen. Jesse Blue, Brian

Mitten and T.J. Harkness are some of the names that could enter in relief.

"We can jog out a lot of people," King said.

Harkness, a sophomore that will also start at either shortstop or center field, will be the guy King counts on to close it out in the final inning.

"He's probably got the liveliest arm of all our pitchers," he said.

But other than just shutting the door on the opposing

team's batters, King thinks Harkness is the real deal in every component of the game.

"T.J. has a chance to be a very gifted baseball player," King said. "I think he's the whole package. He can run, hit for average and I think he has the potential to drive the ball as well."

Last season as a freshman, Harkness hit out of the nine-

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hole in the Little Giants lineup. He got penciled into the leadoff spot this summer on King's legion squad, but should be Ross's No. 2 or No. 3 hitter this time around.

Other returnees in the middle of the lineup will include first baseman Derek Waggoner, who will probably be the clean-up hitter, and left fielder Brandon Graeter.

"Brandon is just absolutely swinging the bat right now," King said. "He came out of his shell for us last season and he's in the top three for us right now in swinging the bats."

Expected to be at third base is freshman Tyler Wolf, while second team all-GBC selection Jake Hiestand (.333, 22 singles, 13 RBI and 13 balls on base) will be at second base. Another possibility at short is Derek Aldrich (.298, four doubles, 11 RBI), who may also be in the mix elsewhere. Sophomore Trent Stout is in the mix for playing time in the outfield as well.

"Technique-wise, I think everyone in this lineup can hit," King said. "But right now, four or five of the kids starting are going to be unproven at the varsity level."

One thing Ross will have,

though, is the ability to run and make things happen on the bases. With power spots lacking in the order as well, it could lead to the Little Giants playing some small ball.

"I think we've got more speed than we've ever had," King said. "We've been known as being a team that was challenged on the bases the last couple of years."

In total, nine lettermen return for the Little Giants who lost the services of Brad Woleslagel (catcher), Kodie Stout (outfield), Josh Mendoza (third base, playing at Bluffton University) and Tyler Hasselbach (designated hitter). Replacing Woleslagel behind the plate is Jordan Garcia, an athletic kid named the JV team's Most Outstanding Player in 2009.

"I actually think our talent is young based," King said. "But we've got an interesting mix of young and old. And it's still early, but based on the way we're hitting the ball and fielding it, I think we're way ahead of where we were last year. Offense is the big question mark for us."

King likes Ross's chances with most of the teams, including GBC champion Sandusky, losing a lot of bats in their lineups.

"I think going in, it's anyone's for the taking," King said of the GBC. "But I definitely like our chances this time."

Little Giants hold on to win close game

BY MATT MILLS
News-Messenger correspondent

FREMONT — The Fremont Ross baseball team opened up its 2010 season at home and in a big way Tuesday.

The Little Giants held on to beat Delta 12-11 in a suspense-filled game that was won when Trent Stout, who went 4-4 from the plate with three RBIs, hit a walk-off single.

"I was just hoping not to strike out and disappoint the fans," Stout said. "Luckily, I came through and got the job done."

Ross starting pitcher Dexter Foos gave up an RBI double in the first inning to Delta's Jeremy Navarro. His offense picked him up, scoring three runs in the bottom of the first, two of them coming on Stout's two-run single.

Foos sat Delta down in order in the second before his counterpart, Austin Abbott of Delta, had to leave without recording an out in the second because of an apparent arm injury after walking two Ross batters on eight pitches. Ryan Callahan came on in relief, giving up only one hit in the inning and holding the Little Giants scoreless after forcing T.J. Harkness to ground into an inning-ending double play.

Delta scored three more runs in the third to take a 4-3 lead until Harkness and Derek Waggoner had back-to-back RBI doubles to put the Little Giants up 5-4. Both teams scored three runs in the fifth inning, giving Ross a one-run lead heading in to the top of the sixth.

After Foos was pulled from the game, Cory Rohrbacher came on in relief and gave up an RBI double to

Navarro. Josh Beverly hit what should have been an inning-ending double play, but Ross second baseman Jake Heistand overthrew first base and the Little Giants also overthrew the throw to the plate, letting two runs score.

Delta added another run on a walk, and led 11-8 after the top of the sixth.

"We're a young team, we start three sophomores and a freshman, were going to make some errors," Ross coach Mark King said. "I know throwing the ball is part of it, but we made no glove errors today. We just need to make a play here and there, and I think that will start happening sooner rather than later."

Waggoner hit a two-run homer in the bottom of the sixth and Spencer Conklin added a sacrifice

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Jennifer Young-Bower | News-Messenger correspondent

Fremont Ross catcher Jordan Garcia makes an attempt for the out at third base during Tuesday's game against Delta.

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RBI to square the game up at 11 heading into the final inning.

Harkness gave up a single in the seventh before striking out Navarro to keep the game tied and give his team a chance to win it in the

bottom half of the inning.

Harkness led off the seventh inning getting hit by a pitch and Waggoner doubled to give the Little Giants runners on second and third with no outs. After an intentional walk to Garcia, Stout hit the game-winning single.

Little Giants get clubbed by Irish

BY MATT MILLS

News-Messenger correspondent

FREMONT — The Fremont Ross baseball team suffered an 8-3 defeat at the bats of Toledo Central Catholic in Fremont on Wednesday evening.

Leading the charge for Central Catholic was Troy Toland with five RBIs.

"This is a quality baseball club," Ross coach Mark King said. "Year-in and year-out they're atop the standing of the Toledo City League. I told the guys coming in that this was going to be a nice, early test for us."

Ross starting pitcher Cameron Hord gave up two runs in the top of the first on a Toland two-RBI single. Hord's counterpart, sen-

UP NEXT

Fremont Ross will take on Oak Harbor on Saturday in a double-header at Oak Harbor. First game starts at 11 a.m.

ior Jeremy Spalding, set down the Little Giants in order the first two innings, including striking out the side in the second inning.

Ross got on the board in the bottom of the third inning when freshman Tyler Wolf notched a sacrifice RBI. Fremont also scored a lone run in the bottom of the fourth inning on a Jesse Blue RBI-single.

Unfortunately for the home team, Central Catholic scored

two runs in the top of the fourth and three runs in the top of the fifth, complements in part to another two-RBI double by Toland. The Irish led 7-2 after five.

"Cameron just didn't hit his spots tonight," King said. "He's our No. 1 or No. 2 pitcher, he'll be fine. He didn't have bad stuff tonight, he just missed his spot and let a few balls get up in the zone on him. You can't do that against a team like Toledo Central Catholic."

Toland added a sacrifice RBI in the top of the seventh for Central Catholic and Ross scored a run in the bottom off a Wolf RBI-double for a final of 8-3.

Ross will have a double-header against Oak Harbor on Saturday.

HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL ■ OAK HARBOR, FREMONT ROSS



Jennifer Young-Bower | News-Messenger correspondent

Fremont's Cory Rohrbacher pitches during the first of a doubleheader on Saturday afternoon against Oak Harbor.

Rockets sweep Little Giants

BY KEVIN SHIELDS
Sports Writer

OAK HARBOR — Last week left a sour taste in the mouth of Oak Harbor senior Damian McAtee.

McAtee and his Rocket teammates started the season 0-2, getting run-ruled in losses to Genoa and St. Joseph Central Catholic.

But on Saturday, McAtee recorded a save in game one of Oak Harbor's double header sweep of Fremont Ross and had a solid start in game two. The Rockets won the opener 4-2 in clear and breezy conditions and won the final game 6-4 in rainy, gale force conditions.

"It was kind of deflating to go up 7-1 on St. Joe last week and then see them come back to beat us 21-11," McAtee said. "That was definitely a little sour for us. But we came out with a lot of intensity today and we did well. We threw strikes and hit the ball — so it was a good day."

After playing behind the plate for five innings in game one, McAtee came out to relieve starter Brian Mallernee in the sixth inning with the Rockets (2-2) up 4-2. He'd allow a single base runner, giving up a hit and recording a strikeout.

Oak Harbor had six hits to four for the Little Giants (1-3) in game one, but found ways to manufacture runs unlike their

counterpart.

"We didn't swing the bat quite as well as we had in the other two games," Rockets coach Rob Schimmoeller said. "We definitely manufactured some runs in these two games."

AJ Cecil's RBI-base hit in the second inning gave the Rockets the early 1-0 edge in the opener. The run was scored by Joey Mallernee who reached on an error by the Ross second baseman.

"When we made mistakes, it always cost us," said Little Giants coach Mark King. "We made three or four mistakes in this double header and all three or four mistakes scored."

Ross plated a single run in

third to tie the game at 1-1, but a Brian Mallernee double to left gave the Rockets a 3-1 edge in the bottom-half of the inning.

Alex Pavlica drove home another runner in the fourth for Oak Harbor and an error brought home a Ross score in the fifth.

It was one of a few breaks the Little Giants got against Brian Mallernee. The right-handed sophomore allowed two runs (one earned) on three hits, striking out eight and walking one.

"He just got ahead in the count and then he battled," Schimmoeller said. "He didn't give in to anybody. He was able

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to throw three pitches for strikes — his fastball, his slider and his change up — and he dominated the bottom of their order.”

“I was happy that things went better than my last outing,” Brian Mallernee joked. “Throwing first-pitch strikes helped out and we had good defense and the wind was a pitcher’s wind too.”

Brian was helped by Joey Mallernee, who finished game one 2-for-3 at the dish with two RBIs. He was one of two Rockets with multiple RBIs in the finale, going 1-for-2 with a two-RBI double in the fourth inning. His hit gave the Rockets a 3-1 lead after trailing through one and a half innings when Jake Hiestand singled home a run for Ross in the second.

Hiestand’s hit was the first of two for the Little Giants in game two, as again, the Rockets pitching was solid. McAtee started, going three innings and surrendering one hit and one unearned run. He gave way to Alex Bores, who got credit for the win, toss-

ing three innings with one hit against him, three runs (one earned), tallying two strikeouts.

After the Rockets had three runs cross in the fifth to go up 6-2, the Little Giants made things interesting in the sixth. Jordan Garcia ripped an RBI-double to deep left and Cory Rohrbacher scored on a wild pitch.

Still, it wasn’t the effort their coach expected.

“I’m disappointed with the effort we got at the plate,” King said. “It’s not that we didn’t hit the ball well, it was the approach we took. We were using our front foot and swinging at the wrong pitches in the wrong counts.

“We just weren’t mechanically there and didn’t get the right kind of swings. We should’ve been getting the ball down and making them make a play instead of trying to drive the ball in gail force winds.”

Garcia finished with four hits in the two contests to top Ross, also scoring two runs.

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Baseball

Fremont Ross beats Fostoria

News-Messenger reports

TJ Harkness scored three runs and Eric Hogle earned the victory in relief as Fremont Ross' baseball team beat Fostoria 11-8 in a non-conference matchup Monday.

Eight of the nine players in the Little Giants' lineup had at least one hit and nine of the 11 runs were earned for Ross (2-3). The Little Giants scored nine runs in the second inning.

"After a subpar performance at the plate Saturday (in two setbacks), we came out and got back to our mechanics and the proper approach (Monday)," Little Giants coach Mark King said. "Even the outs were hit hard. The approach was night and day compared to Saturday and that's what spelled the win."

Hogle allowed three runs — one earned — and four hits in four innings. Starter Jesse Blue allowed five runs in three innings.

Harkness, Trent Stout, Jordan Garcia and Spencer Conklin each had two hits for Ross. Harkness and Stout each had two RBIs and Stout scored two runs.

Garcia and Conklin each scored once and drove in a run.

Halladay and Evan Kruse each drove in one run for the Redmen (3-2).

"Their pitcher did a nice job keeping us off balance throughout the game," Bellevue coach Andy Dennings said. "We didn't play well defensively at times and Edison took advantage. We need to have more quality at bats throughout the game. We lost our focus at the plate in the middle innings but came around later in the game. It was just too late at that point."

Softball

Goetz steals a victory

Aubrey Goetz stole home for the game's only run as Gibsonburg's softball team beat Cardinal Stritch 1-0.

Goetz and Katie DuShane each drew a walk in the fourth inning before Goetz took third on a delayed steal. The two then executed a double steal for the Golden Bears (2-1).

Sam Stainbrook allowed only one hit and struck out nine in seven innings for the win in the circle.

Little Giants get back to winning

News-Messenger reports

BASEBALL

LIMA — After a 1-3 start to the season, the Fremont Ross baseball team has once again reached .500, scoring a 17-4 win at Lima Senior in Greater Buckeye Conference action Tuesday.

The Little Giants (3-3) got strong pitching from Cameron Hord and backed him up with 18 hits.

Derek Waggoner led the way, going 3-for-5 at the dish, with six RBIs, two home runs and a double. Tallying two RBIs was sophomore Trent Stout, while Branden Graeter scored four runs and Tyler Wolf three.

Hord earned the victory on the hill, going seven innings. He gave up four runs (three earned) on eight hits and struck out nine.

Little Giants stay unbeaten in GBC play

News-Messenger reports

FREMONT — Dexter Foos went the distance and got the win as Ross beat Marion Harding 8-6 in a Greater Buckeye Conference matchup Friday.

Jordan Garcia doubled as part of a 2-for-3 day at the plate. He scored a run and knocked in another for the Little Giants (4-3, 2-0). Brandon Graeter also went 2-for-3 with a run scored. ■

Rohrbacher solid in Ross defeat

TOLEDO — Fremont Ross got a strong outing from Cory Rohrbacher on the mound, but the Little Giants fell 2-0 to Toledo Bowsher in Monday's non-league action.

Rohrbacher tossed seven innings, scattering five hits and allowing a single earned run. The right-hander struck out five, but the Rebels (9-3) kept the ball on the ground, and the Little Giants (4-4) stayed in the air too much.

"We hit too many fly balls," Ross coach Mark King said. "They kept the ball on the ground and scored some runs because of it."

Bowsher scored single runs in the third and fifth innings. Still, Rohrbacher was solid and kept the damage to a minimum.

"It was by far Cory's best outing of the year," King said. "It's just a shame we couldn't win it for him."

BASEBALL ■ FINDLAY 10, ROSS 0

Trojans dominate Little Giants

BY KYLE SCHIMMING

News-Messenger correspondent

FINDLAY — From start to finish Tuesday, the Fremont Ross baseball team was no match for the Findlay Trojans.

Trojans pitcher Clay Paul was a big reason for the Little Giants' struggles. He threw a no-hitter as Findlay defeated Ross 10-0 in five innings in the Greater Buckeye Conference.

"We got dominated," Ross coach Mark King said. "Paul is a

nice pitcher and he came out and dominated. This is two nights in a row — last night we had two hits in a close 2-0 game."

Paul, a first-team all-GBC pitcher last season, attacked the Little Giants (4-5, 2-1 GBC) with a variety of pitches to keep them off balance.

"I threw my changeup pretty good in the first couple of innings and my curveball started biting toward the end," Paul said. "Then they started giving respect to my curveball so I could just throw my

fastball by them.

"It's awesome. It's actually the first no-hitter I've ever thrown, so it feels really good."

Ross pitcher Cameron Hord found himself in a 5-0 hole in the first inning on Brandan Powell's two-run triple, RBI singles from Paul and Sam Adams and a sacrifice bunt.

The Trojans (5-3, 2-1) continued their roll in the second inning. They pushed their lead to 8-0 as Jordan Widman and Powell notched run-scoring singles.

"We came out swinging the bats right away," Findlay coach Jeff Stutzman said. "We've been swinging the bats pretty good."

Hord was relieved after the second inning by Dexter Foos, who allowed two Trojan runs in his two innings of work.

Ross got its first baserunner in the fifth inning when Derek Waggoner reached on an error. That was followed by a walk for Jordan Garcia, giving the Little Giants

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their best scoring opportunity.

The two runners were stranded when Paul retired the next three hitters to end the threat and the game.

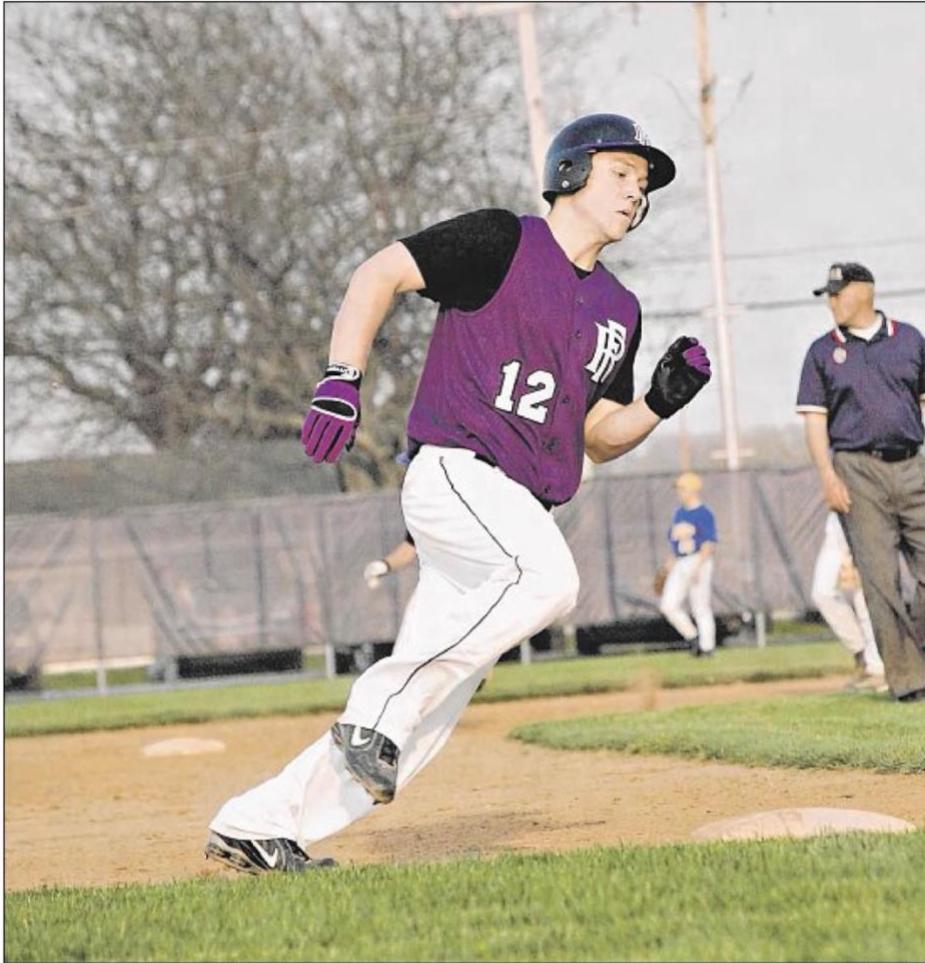
“We’re a young team, and we’ve got to understand that hitting is a discipline and right now we’re kind of up and down on our discipline,” King said. “We played pretty well defensively.

“We are so much more improved defensively from the start of the year.”

Ross will be in action again Thursday against Clyde at home and Friday at home when it plays host to defending league champion Sandusky.

“(Wednesday) we’ve got to re-focus and start working on our approach at the plate,” King said. “We’re having a few growing pains so we need to get back and just work on what we need to work on and hopefully we’ll get back on the winning track.”

HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL ■ ROSS 8, CLYDE 7



Brenda Soule | News-Messenger correspondent

Ross' Trent Stout rounds third to score a run early in Thursday's game with Clyde. Stout hit a two-run double in the bottom of the sixth that gave the Little Giants an 8-7 victory.

Ross strikes final blow

Stout's double gives Little Giants win over Clyde

BY KYLE SCHIMMING
News-Messenger correspondent

FREMONT — After Fremont Ross and Clyde went back and forth on the scoreboard for the first five innings, the Little Giants' Trent Stout landed the knockout punch that led to Ross' 8-7 victory on Thursday.

Trailing 7-6 in the bottom of the sixth inning, Stout drove in two runs on his double to left field to give the Little Giants (5-5) the lead for good and cap off a five-run comeback.

"It feels good, I am glad I could do it for my teammates," Stout said. "I got a fastball right down the middle and I was able to hit it in the gap."

Ross jumped out to a first-inning lead when Brandon Greator scored on a wild. The Little Giants added another run in the second when Clyde

starting pitcher Jose Leal walked Tyler Wolf with the bases loaded to go up 2-0.

The Clyde offense got going in the third inning when Drew Frazier tied the game with a two-run homer off Ross starter Jesse Blue. Brandon Flores later doubled in a run for a 3-2 Fliers' lead.

After the teams each scored in the fourth inning, the Little Giants brought in Eric Hogle. The move did little however, to cool the Clyde bats.

Two RBI doubles by Alex Jess and Mike Moore, along with a sacrifice fly from Trenton Hermes gave the Fliers (8-4) their largest lead of the game at 7-3.

"We came out tonight and got a 2-0 lead, but Clyde has got a great baseball team we knew they were going to hit the ball," Ross coach Mark King said.

"One of the keys for me is we didn't make an error tonight, so we made the play when we had a chance to."

The Little Giants cut into the Fliers lead with Cory Rohrbacher's double off Clyde reliever Royce Laurendeau that scored two runs in the fifth inning.

After two Ross batters reached base, Jordan Garcia singled to bring the score to 7-6, setting up Stout's double. The Fliers would have one more chance in the seventh, however Hogle retired them in order.

"We played an excellent five-inning baseball game, but the trouble with that is that we were scheduled for seven," Clyde coach Bill Selvey said. "The last two we were waiting for a defensive play and nobody came up with it."

The Fliers host Sandusky Bay Conference opponent Margaretta on Friday.

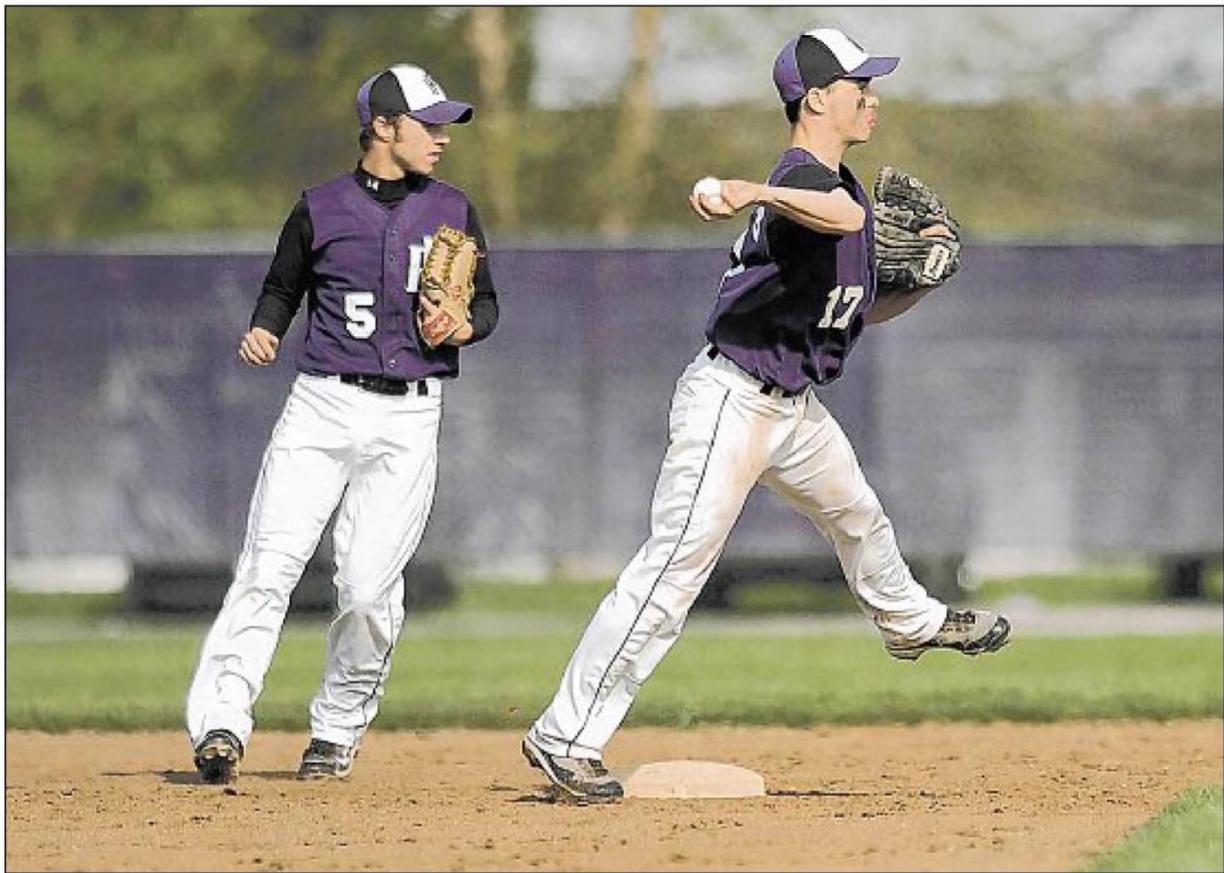
"Overall, we saw a lot of positives," Selvey said. "There's a lot of good things going on with this team, we'll get back to league play tomorrow."

For Ross coach King, his team's performance is just what he was hoping for as they prepare to take on defending league champion Sandusky at home on Friday.

"I think tonight is the first time in ten games that we showed up as a team," King said. "We've got some young guys and old guys; I don't think we had showed that continuity as a team."

"That's what these kids need; I think we were one pitch, one hit, one score from getting back on the right track going into our game with Sandusky."

HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL ■ SANDUSKY 12, FREMONT ROSS 8



Jonathon Bird | News-Messenger

Ross shortstop T.J. Harkness makes a throw to first as second baseman Jake Heistand looks on during Friday's Greater Buckeye Conference game with Sandusky. The GBC-leading Blue Streaks won 12-8.

Errors costly for Ross

Sandusky scores five unearned runs in GBC victory

BY KEVIN SHIELDS
Sports writer

FREMONT — The Fremont Ross baseball team picked a bad time to have a defensive relapse.

One night after putting things together with the gloves to play their most complete game of the season in a win over Clyde, the Little Giants had four errors and allowed five unearned runs Friday in a 12-8 loss to Sandusky in a Greater Buckeye Conference game.

The Blue Streaks (8-2, 4-0

GBC) weren't bashful about taking advantage of those blunders. Sandusky scored four unearned runs on just two hits in the third inning, putting the Little Giants (5-6, 2-2) in a hole after a positive start.

"You just can't give a team like Sandusky that many extra outs and that many extra opportunities," Ross coach Mark King said. "You expect some physical errors in high school baseball, but today we had a ton of mental mistakes on top of some physical errors and that cost us."

Down 4-0 in the bottom of the third, Ross got a break of its own to cut the Blue Streaks' edge to two. After Jake Hiestand singled and Cory Rohrbacher drew a walk, Spencer Conklin brought home Ross' first run on an RBI single to right. Sandusky's first baseman then overshot third base on an attempted double play throw, allowing Rohrbacher to score.

The break was short lived, as Sandusky scored twice in the fourth to go up 6-2. But the Little Giants fought right back in their half of the inning, get-

ting an RBI base hit from Trent Stout and a two-run double from Conklin.

Conklin went on to 2-for-3 at the plate with a team-high three RBIs and two runs. Not a bad effort for a freshman batting around .160 in the No. 9 spot.

"Going into the season, we were struggling to find a left fielder and Spencer has done a nice job of learning outfield for us and took that role," King said. "He's done a nice job for

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us defensively, but he was struggling at the plate and tonight he hit it well."

A two-run homer by Brady Smith highlighted a five-run sixth inning for the Blue Streaks that proved too big a blow for Ross to recover from.

"That was a big inning for us and we needed all of them," Sandusky coach Matt Martin said. "We knew that they were going to come back and with the top of our order starting the inning off, we thought we could get a couple, but we were very grateful for five."

Jordan Garcia and Hiestand scored runs in the sixth on errors and freshman Tyler Wolf had an RBI single for Ross. Their efforts cut the Sandusky lead to 11-8, but Blue Streak starter Jordan Esposito shut the door on Ross in the seventh to secure the win. Esposito allowed nine hits, surrendering four earned runs with two strikeouts and three walks.

"I thought we were really aggressive for the week we had at the plate," King said. "Hopefully that'll lead to good things for us down the road."

Dexter Foos took the loss for Ross, giving up seven earned runs on 15 hits, striking out five and walking one.

"I thought Foos had a tight strike zone, but so did Sandusky's pitcher," King said. "That probably led to both of them throwing the ball down the middle of the plate more and balls getting hit hard into gaps."

Still, King was pleased with his young's team never-say-die attitude and the fight they showed.

"I give my kids accolades for being young and continuing to compete all the way to the end," King said. "It's not panic time yet, but last night we put a whole game together and we have to get back to having games like that."

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BASEBALL

NAPOLEON 11, ROSS 9

Errors once again hamper Little Giants

BY KYLE SCHIMMING

News-Messenger correspondent

NAPOLEON — Overcoming a talented Napoleon baseball team is a tough enough task for Fremont Ross.

The obstacle becomes even more challenging when the Little Giants make mistakes defensively, as they did Tuesday in an 11-9 setback in the Greater Buckeye Conference.

"I'm extremely disappointed and I'm extremely frustrated," Ross coach Mark King said. "We can compete, we can hit and we've got someone on the mound, but until we start making a play we're not going to win baseball games."

Ross committed four errors and failed to make several plays King thought should have been made.

"We gave up, on the scoreboard, 14 hits," King said. "If you watched that game there was no way there were 14 hits. There was about seven we gave up, not 14. We continue to shoot ourselves in the foot."

After leading for the first five innings, Ross (6-8, 2-3 GBC) fell behind in the sixth as Napoleon scored five runs with the help of two Little Giant errors.

"We went out against one of the top pitchers in this league, drove him all over and scored nine runs," King said. "And again for the second time in two weeks we could not make a play."

Ross got off to a hot start when Jordan Garcia drilled a double into the left field gap to bring home three runs. Derek Waggoner drove in Garcia with a grounder to first base.

The Wildcats (10-4) quickly answered off Little Giants starter Dexter Foos with an RBI double from Collin Parcher and a sacrifice fly from Adam Sehlmeyer.

Both offenses continued to hit in the second, with Ross adding two more runs off hits from Tyler Wolf and T.J. Harkness against Napoleon ace Arthur Warren.

Napoleon followed up with three runs of its own on Ryan Gilliland's two-run triple and another hit from Parcher.

"We had another good performance offensively,"

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BASEBALL FROM 7

Wildcats coach Justin Firks said. "Offensively, we're pretty solid and our kids really believed our sticks would get us back in the game."

Foos, who struck out five Napoleon hitters over six innings, settled down after the second inning and retired the next six hitters he faced. Harkness pushed the Little Giants' lead to 7-5 on his single in the fourth.

After Napoleon's first hitter of the fifth reached on an error, it pulled within a run on Sehlmeyer's double before he reached third after a throwing error. Foos, however, breezed

through the next three batters to leave him stranded.

Two Little Giants errors, doubles by Warren, Sehlmeyer and Ross Huber, and a triple from Gilliland led to an 11-7 advantage for Napoleon.

Ross threatened in the seventh after Jake Hiestand doubled to drive in two runs and brought the tying run to the plate before Warren settled down to get the next two Little Giants hitters to fly out.

"We didn't give up and we kept battling," Firks said. "We came up with a number of big hits."

Harkness led the way offensively for Ross, going 3-for-3 with three RBI.

HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL

ROSS 4, TOLEDO WAITE 3

Little Giants break losing streak with comeback win

BY KEVIN SHIELDS
Sports writer

FREMONT — If there has been one team in need of a break in recent weeks, it has been the Fremont Ross baseball team.

The Little Giants have found way after way to put themselves in the loss column. Whether it was a lack of clutch hitting, shooting themselves in the foot with errors, or a lack of pitching, Ross had it happen one way or the other.

But on Thursday, Ross's luck changed in a 4-3 win over Toledo Waite.

Trailing 3-1 going into their final at-bat, the Little Giants (7-8) strung together four hits and scored three runs. The final hit came from Brian Mitten, who pounded a fastball into left field to bring home TJ Harkness from third — ending some of the recent misery.

"This is what we needed," Ross coach Mark King said. "We've hit the ball at the plate and should've won three or four of our last six games, but didn't get it done."

The Little Giants had just five hits heading into the seventh inning. Indians' pitcher Catorino Hernandez allowed Ross a single base knock through four. Finally the Little Giants got to him for eight hits in the final 2½ innings.

Until that point though, King had a new reason for worry as Ross had been averaging around eight to nine runs per game. Would the Little Giants lose because of a lack of offense now?

"Tonight we didn't hit the ball well early in the game," King said. "We had multiple runners on base three different times and couldn't come up with a hit."

Brandon Graeter and Jordan Garcia had back-to-back hits to start the Ross seventh — giving the Little Giants their first sign of momentum at the plate. Harkness then brought Ross one run down with an RBI single to

SEE ROSS I B4

ROSS FROM B1

make it 3-2. And then the hitting parade was on.

"The last inning really showed the kids' drive," King said. "Singles get contagious and that's what happened in the seventh."

Trent Stout grounded out to bring the tying run across, but Derek Waggoner followed with another ground out to short for the second out. Jesse Blue and Jake Hiestand both worked the counts, though, drawing free bases and had the bases loaded for Mitten.

"We knew the kid (Hernandez) didn't want to go deep in the count after walking a kid and hitting a kid," King said. "So he tried to get ahead and came right over the middle with a fastball and Brian jumped right on it."

For Mitten, who led Ross 3-for-4 at the plate, it was

a chance for redemption. His previous at bat, he singled and got on base, but was picked off first when he mistakenly thought a bunt was on.

"I got up there and I was thinking about the last time I was on base, I got thrown out at first," said Mitten. "I wanted to come back up and be a team player and make it up to my teammates."

Like his coach, Mitten welcomed some good news for a change.

"We've kind of had a bad attitude from the losing," Mitten said. "It kind of works out though when we come together as a team and once we get momentum going we're pretty good."

Waite (7-5-1) led 3-0 after scoring twice in the third inning and once in the fourth off Ross starter Cory Rohrbacher. Jordan Garcia's sacrifice fly in the fifth cut the Indians' edge to 3-1 as Rohrbacher and

the defense got settled in.

"Cory did a nice job," King said. "They had a lot of flares go for base hits. He showed a lot of resilience and he didn't have the breaking pitch early, but he had it late in the game."

Rohrbacher went the distance, surrendering Waite's three runs on nine hits. He struck out four and walked two, allowing just three hits in the final three innings.

"We had a solid defensive performance," King said. "We've been afraid and not stepping up to make a play, and we made plays in the seventh to give ourselves a chance."

Graeter and Harkness added two hits for Ross, Graeter, Garcia and Hogle added runs scored.

Phil Hatch paced the Indians with two hits and two RBIs.

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Clutch hit carries Ross to victory

BY KYLE SCHIMMING
News-Messenger correspondent

FREMONT — For the second straight game, the Fremont Ross baseball team used clutch hitting in its final at-bat to come out with a win.

A day after Brian Mitten drove in the winning run to beat Toledo Waite, it was Jordan Garcia's turn to be the hero. Garcia's one-out hit down the left field line drove in Mitten, and the Little Giants defeated Lima Senior 3-2 in their Greater Buckeye Conference matchup.

"It gave me the confidence up there that if we did it last night we can do it again tonight," Garcia said. "It feels great to get a win for the team, anything for the team."

The late-game dramatics was made possible behind the pitching of Cameron Hord, who picked up the win while striking out five over seven innings.

"Cameron kept us in the game for sure," Garcia said. "He hit his spots when he needed to and did exactly what we needed to win a baseball game."

Ross (8-8) took an early lead when Garcia scored on Tyler Wolf's sacrifice fly in the first inning. Another sacrifice fly by Trent Stout in the third pushed the lead to 2-0.

Staked to their early lead, the Little Giants would not be able to generate any more offense until their final turn at the plate, which allowed Lima Senior (4-10) to climb back in the game.

"When you play 27 or 28 high

school baseball games you're not going to hit it every night," Ross coach Mark King said. "I'm giving our kids credit for the fact that we've come out the last two nights and knew what we had to get done at the end of the game and stepped it up when we had to."

The Spartans tied the game in the fifth with RBI hits by Tyler Sweigert and Brandon Stinson, but could never find a way to take the lead off of Hord.

"We thought if we could get him (Hord) into the stretch we would be able to get some hits off of him," Lima Senior coach Jimmy Morris said. "It was a well-played high school baseball game, you've got to give credit to

SEE ROSS I B2



Jennifer Young-Bower | News-Messenger correspondent
Fremont's Jake Heistand comes off the bag after making a play at first base during Friday's Greater Buckeye Conference game against Lima Senior.

ROSS FROM B1

Fremont, they got some clutch hits there at the end."

Mitten reached on an infield single to start off the seventh and got into scoring position when Jesse Blue's bunt allowed him to move to second base. Spencer Conklin then reached on a fly ball that was nearly caught, keeping Mitten from advancing, which set up Garcia's game-winning hit.

"Brian Mitten just needed to put the ball in play and he did and Jesse Blue got down a great

bunt," King said. "Jordan and T.J. (Harkness) are the two we would want up there in that situation.

"Jordan was able to turn on a pitch and hit it over their heads since they were playing in."

Ross found a way to grind out the win, despite being limited to five hits for the game.

"It's a big win for us when in the last two weeks we've been losing games we should have won," King said. "Any league win is big, so we'll get back and work on some hitting on Monday and then get back to the league on Tuesday."

FREMONT ROSS 3, MARION HARDING 1

Fremont Ross	001	101	0—	3	6	1
Marion Harding	000	001	0—	1	4	0

- **WP:** Dexter Foos (7 IP, 0 ER, 4 H, 5 SO, 1 BB).
- **LP:** Endsley (4 SO, 4 BB).
- **Two or more hits:** ROSS: TJ Harkness 2.
- **Records:** ROSS 9-8 (4-3 Greater Buckeye Conference).
- **Next:** Ross vs. St. John's, today.

TOLEDO ST. JOHN'S 10, FREMONT ROSS 5

Trent Stout hit a grand slam

SEE ROUNDUP I B2

ROUNDUP FROM B1

but Ross lost to St. John's in a non-conference matchup.

Derek Waggoner had three hits for the Little Giants (9-9).

News-Messenger reports

Baseball

SECTIONAL DRAW

St. Joseph Central Catholic, Fremont Ross, Oak Harbor and Bellevue will each play for a sectional baseball championship May 11.

The second-seed Crimson Streaks will play the winner of Saturday's lower bracket game between Tiffin Calvert and Old Fort at 5 p.m. May 12 at Hopewell-Loudon. The Stockaders and Calvert play after Bettsville faces Danbury at 12 p.m. in the upper bracket Saturday.

Ross faces Ashland for a sectional championship at 12:30 p.m. Saturday at Shelby.

The Redmen and Rockets will play for a sectional title in the lower bracket at 5 p.m. May 11 at Fremont Ross.

Clyde faces Port Clinton in the first round of the upper bracket at 12 p.m. Saturday at Ross.

Gibsonburg plays Huron in the first round at 12 p.m. Saturday at Bellevue.

Lakota plays Woodmore in the first round of the upper bracket at 11 a.m. Saturday at Elmwood.

ROSS 5, BELLEVUE 3

BELLEVUE 17, ROSS 9

Jesse Blue struck out four and walked one in seven innings and Derek Waggoner hit a 3-run go-ahead home run and scored twice as Ross topped Bellevue in the first game of a doubleheader Saturday.

"Jesse threw a great game," Little Giants coach Mark King said. "It was his third start and best outing. He made only two mistakes all day. He kept them off balance. He hit his spots. We played outstanding defense and got the big hit from Wags to seal the victory."

Brandon Graeter had two hits, and Jake Hiestand and Cory Rohrbacher each drove in a run for Ross.

Nick Valko scored once and drove in a run in the Redmen's loss.

Bellevue (12-7) scored six runs in the third inning and four in the fifth in its victory. Jordan McNeely earned the win on the mound, Valko had a home run and four RBIs, and Sean Halladay scored three runs and drove in three.

Jake Sears added two RBIs in

the Redmen's victory.

Jordan Garcia hit a 3-run home run and scored twice in the setback for Ross (10-11). Graeter had three hits and scored three runs, and TJ Harkness and Spencer Conklin each scored once.

"It was a well-played first game and kind of the opposite in the second," King said.

WOODMORE 9, PORT CLINTON 6

Jake Zollinger hit a home run and drove in three runs, and David Jacobs allowed three runs (none earned) as Woodmore's baseball team defeated Port Clinton in a non-conference matchup.

Cameron Shirer, Adam Trolio and Coleton Bihm each scored two runs, and Ryan Beam, Zollinger and Jacobs each scored once for the Wildcats. Andy Flick, Trolio and Shirer each drove in a run, Beam walked three times and Zac Brossia had three hits.

Beam struck out six in three innings for the save.

Softball

SECTIONAL DRAW

Second-seed Ross plays Ashland for a sectional championship at 2 p.m. Saturday at Ross.

SJCC faces the winner of Saturday's game between Ottawa Hills and Danbury for a sectional crown in the upper bracket at 5 p.m. May 11 at Gibsonburg.

Clyde plays Oak Harbor at 12 p.m. Saturday in the first round in the lower bracket at Clyde.

Bellevue faces Woodward at 10 a.m. Saturday in the first round in the upper bracket at Clyde.

Top-seed Gibsonburg plays the winner of Saturday's game between Genoa and Cardinal Stritch in the lower bracket at 5 p.m. May

BOYS TRACK AND FIELD

GIBSONBURG INVITATIONAL

■ Site: Gibsonburg High School, Gibsonburg.

■ Team scores: 1. Anna, 121.5; 2. Gibsonburg, 98.5; 3. Lake, 72; 4. St. Wendelin, 70; 5. Evergreen, 53; 6. St. Mary CC, 52; 7. Elmwood, 49; 7. Rossford, 49; 9. Ottawa Hills, 36; 10. North Baltimore, 30; 11. Northwood, 22; Maumee Valley C.D., 9.

■ Shot put: 1. Dillon Rickard, STW, 48-02.25; Bobby Heath, GIB, 40-06.75; Jared Columber, GIB, 40-06.00.

■ Discus: 1. Dillon Rickard, STW, 135-02; 5. Jared Columber, GIB, 125-05; 6. Bobby Heath, GIB, 124-06.

■ Pole vault: 1. Kyle Walby, GIB, 12-03; 4. Jon Angelone, GIB, 10-06.

■ Long jump: 1. Kameron Knight, ANNA, 20-07.25; 15. Brent Kromer, GIB, 16-06; 18. Jordan Jahna, GIB, 15-02.25.

■ High jump: 1. Braden Oltman, SMCC, 5-10; 5. Levi Wright, GIB, J5-06.

■ 110 hurdles: 1. Kyle Smithey, ELM, 42.7;

■ 300 hurdles: 1. Kyle Smithey, ELM, 42.7;

**HIGH SCHOOL
SPORTS ■ ROUNDUP**

Baseball: Ross beats Findlay 13-12 in GBC

News-Messenger reports

The Ross baseball team got hits from eight of nine players in its lineup Tuesday, as it outlasted arch-rival Findlay 13-12 for a Greater Buckeye Conference win.

"We just showed a lot of resilience today," Ross coach Mark King said. "We went down 6-1 early in the game, but we battled and did the things we needed to do."

Brandon Graeter (2-3, 3 runs, RBI), Jordan Garcia (2-4, 1 runs 6 RBIs), Cory Rohrbacher (2-3, 3 runs and Jake Hiestand (2-3, 2 runs RBI) all had multiple hits for the Little Giants (11-11, 5-4), who scored runs in all, but the third inning.

Garcia hit a grand slam in the second to help Ross tie the game at six.

Rohrbacher then recovered on the mound after a rocky start to help key the Little Giants comeback.

"Cory hit his spots and he didn't want to give up the ball," King

SEE ROUNDUP | B2



Brenda Soule
News-Messenger correspondent
Fremont Ross pitcher Cory Rohrbacher winds up during Tuesday's game against Findlay. Ross won 13-12.

said. "He battled until the end and showed a lot of competitiveness."

Rohrbacher struck out seven and walked five, allowing 12 runs (nine earned) on 13 hits.

It was enough for the offense though, which came through with runners in scoring position.

"Our kids really did a great of stepping up and hitting with runners in scoring position," King said. "It's a great win in the conference over a great rival, and it's important for us heading into tournament play to get efforts like this."

BASEBALL

ROSS 4, WHITMER 2

Glove work helps Ross to victory

BY MASON LOWRY

News-Messenger correspondent

TOLEDO — Good team defense can make a pitcher's life that much easier.

Fremont Ross junior Jesse Blue found that out Thursday night when the Little Giants (12-11, 5-4 GBC) rode a stellar pitching performance from Blue, a great defensive effort and strong effort at the plate from Jordan Garcia to a 4-2 non-conference win over Whitmer.

"I'm extremely happy with our kids tonight," Ross coach Mark King said. "We played hard, defended well and with the tournament coming up, this is the best time of the year to be playing so well."

Blue is picking up steam at the right time as well after going the distance, giving up just five hits and striking out three to pick up his second-straight win.

"He's had back-to-back great outings," King said. "He threw strikes all night, he changed his speeds and he mixed his pitches. He was just great."

Blue gave some credit to the guys playing behind him.

"The defense was great — it was a beautiful game from them," he said. "It just felt so easy out there."

Blue certainly made it look easy. He mowed down the first nine Panther batters in order to start the game. By then, his offense had staked him to a 3-0 lead after scoring all three in the first.

Brandon Graeter led off the game by beating out an infield single. Garcia then blasted a Whitmer starter Alex Ricca's 3-1 pitch way over the fence in left center field to put the Little Giants on the board. TJ Harkness followed with a single, and a one-out walk to Tyler Wolf and a single from Derek Waggoner loaded the bases with one out.

Jake Hiestand nearly followed with a grand slam, but his drive down the left-field line landed just feet shy of the wall, but delivered a run.

Scott Pfeifer broke up Blue's perfect game by leading off the fourth with a towering home run. Blue responded by retiring the side in order after that. The Panthers drew within one after Luke Hickey beat out an infield single to plate Jack Linch in the fifth, but once again Blue escaped further damage.

Ross added an insurance run in their half of the sixth. Little-used Justin Ward smashed a one-out double off the fence in left center, and Graeter plated pinch-runner Spencer Conklin with a double of his own. Blue went back out for the seventh and, despite

SEE ROSS I B4

ROSS FROM B1

issuing his first walk of the game to Chris Reaper and another infield single to Hickey, he forced Jake Lawniczak to fly out weakly to right to end the threat and the game.

The strength of Ross's

performance, though, made the final score look a bit closer than the game may have been. Ross out-hit Whitmer 12-5, but left nine men on base.

"We hit the ball very well," King said, "but we just couldn't capitalize. We've got to do better."

Garcia led the way offen-

sively, hitting a home run, a double and a single in his first three at-bats before grounding in out final attempt.

"He's seeing the ball really well right now," King said. "He's really leading us at the plate."

King also singled out Ward, whose double in the

sixth led to an insurance run.

"His playing time has been pretty sparse this year," he said, "but when we needed him he really delivered. It's a big hit for him."

The Little Giants play Napoleon at home today before entering tournament play against Ashland on Saturday in Shelby.

HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL ■ NAPOLEON 3, FREMONT ROSS 2

Napoleon wins a classic

Wildcats score in ninth to top Ross in GBC play

BY KYLE SCHIMMING

News-Messenger correspondent

FREMONT — With Fremont Ross' Cameron Hord and Napoleon's Arthur Warren locked in a pitchers duel, it took nine innings to decide a winner.

Unfortunately for the Little Giants, they wound up on the short end of a 3-2 decision against the Wildcats in Friday's Greater Buckeye Conference matchup.

"That was a great pitched high school baseball game," Ross coach Mark King said. "Both pitchers were in command of the whole game; both kids did a heck of a job."

Hord, who struck out nine while tossing a complete game, kept the Wildcats (17-6) off the board until they were down to their final strike in the seventh.

With Ross clinging to a 2-0 lead with Napoleon runners on second and third, Napoleon's Dylan Glass doubled to tie the score and extend the game. The Little Giants (12-12) surrendered the lead two innings later on an RBI single by Austin Monnin, which turned out to be the winning run.

"How can you out any better than that," King said of Hord. "That's a great outing by a senior in his last day out here at Alumni Field, he was one strike away from winning that game.

"The pitch got up a little bit and got out in the wind and got it to the fence and tied the ball game. I can't say enough about what he (Hord) did."

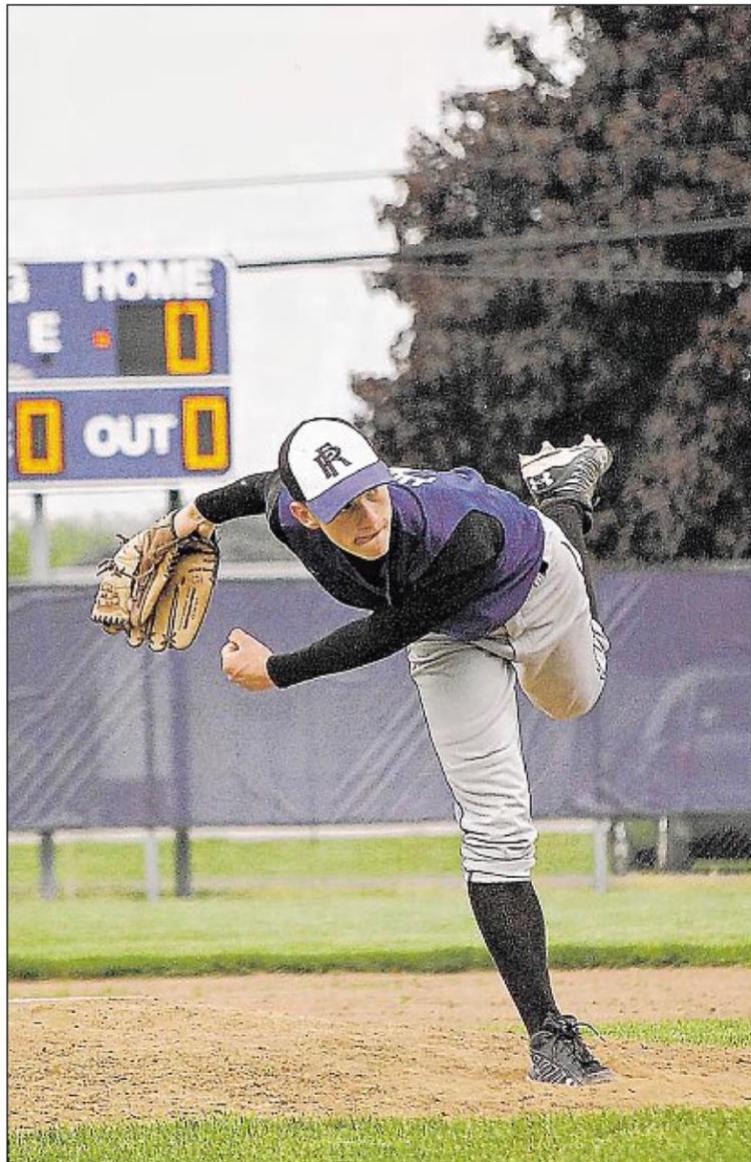
Ross put both of their runs on the board in the fourth inning off of Warren, who also went the distance while striking out 14. Jake Hiestand got the scoring started with an RBI single and Cory Rohrbacher followed that up with a sacrifice fly.

The first two batters of the seventh reached for Napoleon on bloop singles to left field. Hord then quickly retired the next two batters before giving up the game-tying double.

After the Little Giants stranded Trent Stout on second after his one-out double, the Wildcats finally broke the tie in the ninth.

"The first six innings we didn't play very well, we didn't really swing the bats but you have to give credit to their pitcher he did a phenomenal job on the mound," Wildcats coach Justin Firk said. "He (Hord) just hit spots, he changed speeds and was able to get his curveball over the plate, he was very effective."

"We found a way to tie it in the seventh on the hit by Glass,



Brenda Soule | News-Messenger correspondent

Ross pitcher Cameron Hord eyes a pitch as it arrives at the plate during Friday's Greater Buckeye conference game against Napoleon. The Little Giants dropped a 3-2 decision in nine innings.

our nine hitter, and Austin Monnin had a big hit in the ninth to go along with Arthur Warren doing a great job on the mound."

Derek Waggoner had two hits and a run for the Little Giants and Tyler Wolf added a double, two walks and a run.

"We've played a nice week of baseball this week," King said. "A hard-fought win against Findlay and played very well against Whitmer last night and we played well again tonight."

King said. "This was a great game; we just as well should have won this as they should have. It just came down to a break at the end."

"I can't say enough about them, I was hoping to move towards the tournament with a win but if I can't go forward with a win then I'll take nine innings and 3-2 against a great ball club."

All-District 9

DIVISION I

- **Player of the Year:** Evan Dix, Ashland.
- **Coach of the Year:** Matt Martin, Sandusky.
- **Coach of the Year:** Evan Dix, Ashland; Mike Drake, Sandusky; Jordan Garcia, Fremont Ross; Zak Esposito, Sandusky; JJ Harkness, Fremont Ross; Logan Adams, Ashland; Nick Tyner, Ashland; Aaron Gabriel, Marion Harding; Trey Keegan, Sandusky; Tyler Wolf, Fremont Ross; Derek Ward, Ashland.
- **Second team:** Adam Schaly, Ashland; Brady Smith, Sandusky; Derek Waggoner, Fremont Ross; Jacob Suppron, Mansfield Senior; Marcus Cobbs, Sandusky; Jake Hiestand, Fremont Ross; Asher Rumple, Marion Harding; Trent Endsley, Marion Harding; Zach Bernhard, Ashland; Brandon Graeter, Fremont Ross.
- **Honorable mention:** Tristen Jefferies, Sandusky; Trent Stout, Fremont Ross; Tyler Haas, Marion Harding; JR Davis, Mansfield Senior.