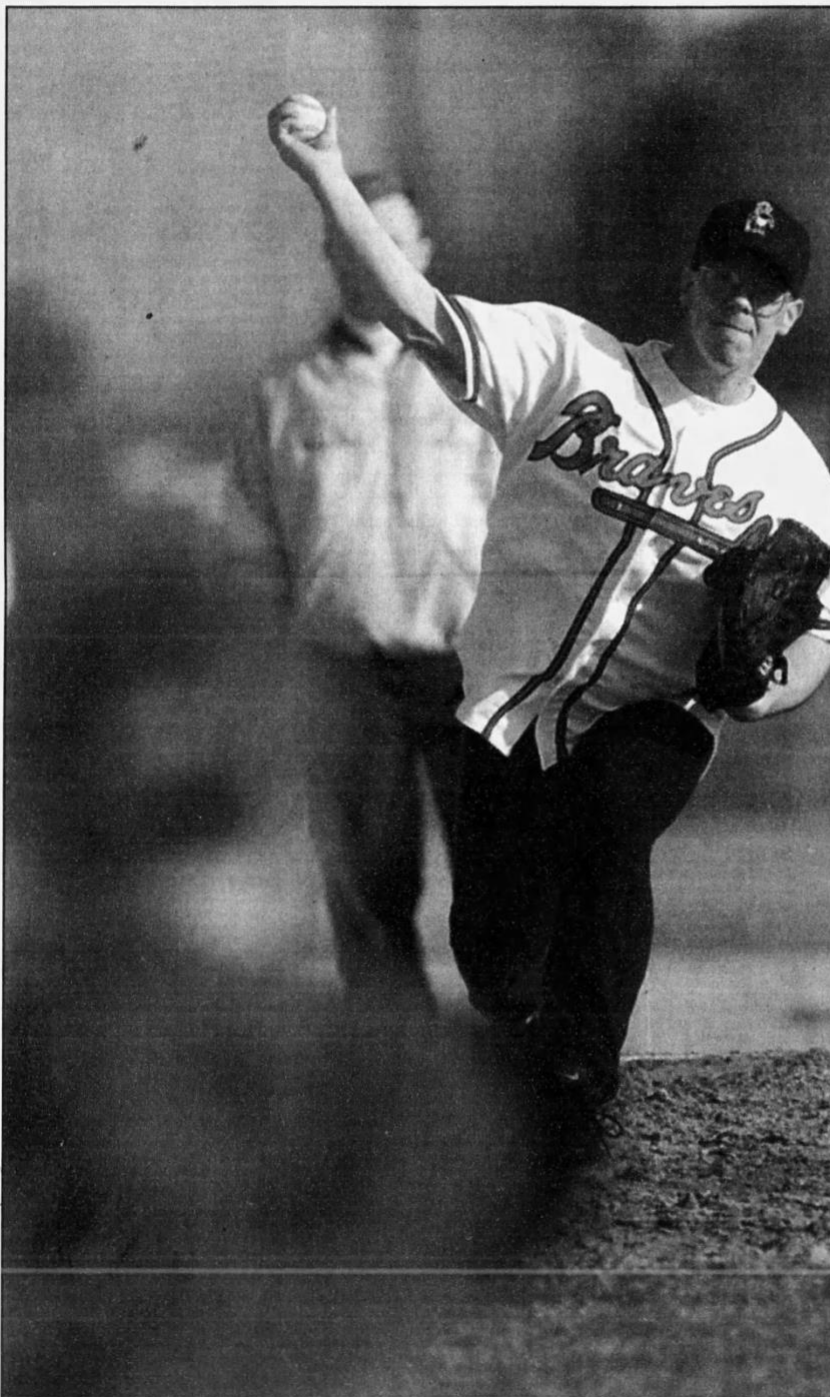


HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL

The future is now



ALEX PATE of Fremont Ross, unleashes a pitch during a scrimmage Wednesday. Pate is one of four inexperienced pitchers the Little Giants will rely upon this season.

News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

Ross relies on untested pitching staff

By **MICHAEL BOSI**
Staff writer

It wasn't too long ago that people looked at the Atlanta Braves and wondered how they could win with so many young pitchers. They had some guys named Glavine and Avery, stole a kid from the Detroit Tigers' system named Smoltz and acquired another so-so hurler named Maddux.

Upon further review, the masterminds in Atlanta knew exactly what they were doing.

And that is the model Fremont Ross baseball coach Dan Fought is trying to follow this year, as his top four pitchers —

all junior varsity regulars last year — had a combined 13½ varsity innings in 1996.

Of newcomers Dan Cobb, Aaron Coonrod, Alex Pate and Bill Sheets, Pate was the only one to pitch for the big club last year. But Cobb, Coonrod and Sheets were a combined 18-4 for the 18-7 JV team.

The big question, obviously: Will they be young guns or simply younguns this season?

"The 18-4 mark that they bring up here, I expect them to get close to it, so my expectations are high," Fought said. "I expect them to throw strikes and let our defense do the work, but also to keep the offense off balance with changing speeds and changing locations."

"They're all smart kids, intelligent about the game and they've played the game a number of years and traveled. They've had experience."

When last we saw the Little Giants, they were wrapping up their second 13-win season knowing that senior hurlers Eric

Play ball!

Area high school baseball coaches are still making decisions on their lineups for the upcoming season.

Team-by-team capsules, B5

See **PATE, B5**

Pate, Cobb, Coonrod and Sheets: Fremont Ross's young guns

Continued from B3

Brough (3-3, 30½ IP, 3.20 ERA) and Bryan Coonrod (3-5, 46, 5.48) would be graduating. But their next most experienced returning pitchers, Nick Jurski and Eric Mulholland, transferred to Gibsonburg and was suspended from the team, respectively.

"Jurski had the talent, but every year he was suspended for me," Fought said. "Mulholland had some real good innings and real good outings, so that one hurts."

The new guys are all friends and they all throw with their

right arms. But they've got distinctive pitching styles.

The most noticeable of the Fresh Four will be Coonrod, a sophomore who stands 6-foot-2, 170 pounds with an 80-mph fastball that will surely heat up with the weather.

"I just try to throw it past them with my fastball and mix it up once in a while with my curveball," said Coonrod (3-2 JV last year) before striking out five in a scrimmage against St. Joseph Central Catholic Wednesday at Alumni Field.

The "goofy" guy, according to Fought, is Sheets, a junior who

was perfect in nine JV decisions last year.

"Sheets is a guy who has a lot of movement and comes at you in a lot of different ways. He looks goofy coming off the mound, and he has a lot of different arm slots," Fought said.

At 6-foot-4, Cobb, who went 6-2 as a freshman, takes an Orel Hersher approach: lots of body and lots of finesse.

Cobb, who will compete with Wesley Esquivel for the starting quarterback job in the fall, is one of those kids who was cut out to quarterback.

"Pitching is kind of the same

because you're in control of the game," Cobb said before exhibiting good command of his curveball against St. Joe.

Pate won his only varsity decision last year and had a 2.05 ERA. By default of being the only senior with the only varsity experience, he'll be the ace of the staff.

That must be why he's the one who wears the No. 31 Greg Maddux Braves jersey.

"Basically I see myself as being the leader of these guys right now. We have a lot of good prospects and we need to work as a unit," Pate said.

With the exception of one Coonrod mistake — a fat pitch that Aaron Pollick launched for a three-run homer — the pitchers' first appearances were quite impressive.

"I was happy with all four of them," Fought said.

It'll take a while for hitters' hands to shake the winter's chill, which will be an advantage as the Ross pitchers get acclimated to varsity lineups.

"They're better hitters than the JV guys were last year so it'll be a challenge this year," Coonrod acknowledged.

Each pitcher believes they can

be a major key to Ross reaching its team goal of 20 victories.

"And then next year," Sheets said, "we'll be together again and be even better I hope."

Right now Pate's jersey is the only connection the Fresh Four have to Atlanta. But we all know what they accomplished with four young guns.

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FREMONT ROSS LITTLE GIANTS

The Little Giants, coming off back-to-back 13-win seasons, have a combined 13 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings of pitching experience back — all in Alex Pate's arm. Coach Dan Fought will rely on his other three starters, Aaron Coonrod, Bill Sheets and Dan Cobb to bring some of their junior varsity winning ways to the big club.

The players are gunning for 20 victories this year. "This pitching staff being 18-4 at JV — the competition is much tougher at this next level — it's a realistic goal if they work hard and have early success," Fought said.

Coach: Dan Fought (11th season)

Last year: 13-12, 6-8 Great Lakes League (4th).

Key losses: P Eric Brough, C Bucky Byers (second-team GLL), P Bryan Coonrod, LF Graham Hogan, 3B Tim Rakes, 1B Ryan Shively, DH Rob Stotz; P Nick Jurski (transferred to Gibsonburg), P Eric Mulholland (suspended).

Key returners: Senior LF Terry Cisco, Senior CF Travis Johnson, IF/OF Jeremy Haslinger, P Alex Pate, 3B Sam Root, RF Derek Thiessen (second-team All-GLL).

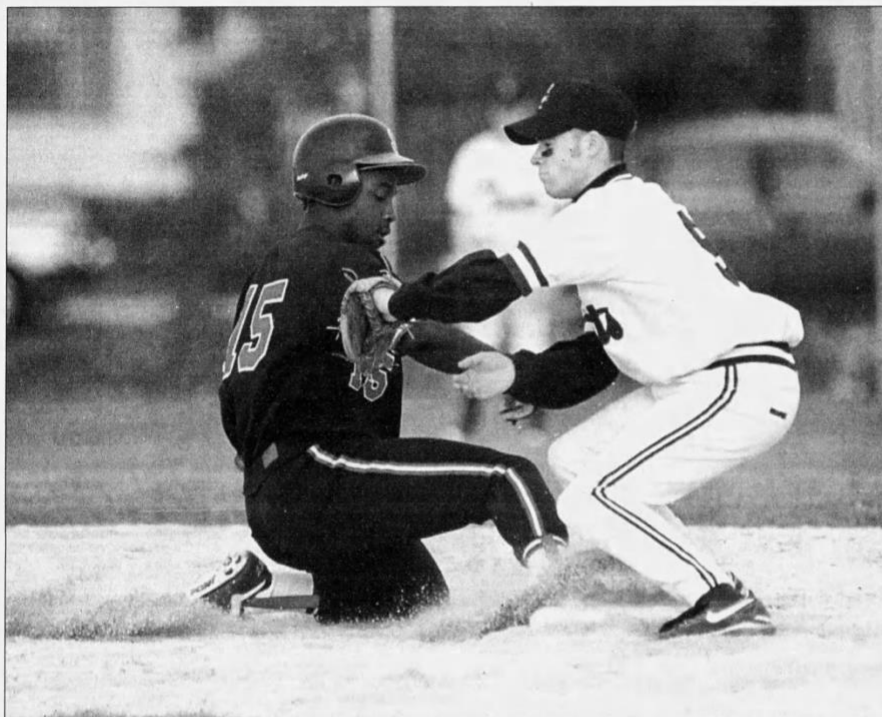
Key dates: April 8 vs. Findlay, April 11 at Clay, April 25 at Whitmer, May 2 at Findlay, May 6 vs. Clay, May 20 vs. Whitmer.

Strengths: Defense. Root has the range to cover ground at third, and senior Mike Hickey appears comfortable at shortstop. Floridian transfer Roy Nino has displayed a quick pivot at second base. Cisco solidifies the outfield and Johnson can fly in center.

Weaknesses: Many players are starting at new positions this year. Graduation and an ankle injury to Thiessen have forced some early juggling. Thiessen won't be able to catch, Root moves from second to third base to spell Rakes. Cisco moves to left field, his natural position.

Outlook: The nucleus is strong enough to make Ross a top-four contender — with Whitmer, Clay and Findlay — for the GLL title. Right now pitching is a question mark, but chances are at least one of the four young hurlers will emerge as a solid starter.

Ross walks past Sandusky



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

DARCEL IRBY of Sandusky beats the tag of Fremont Ross's Mike Hickey during a pickoff attempt Thursday at Alumni Field.

Esquivel draws free pass to force in go-ahead run

By MICHAEL BOSI
Staff writer

BASEBALL

To change or not to change.

That, was the question both the Sandusky and Fremont Ross coaches faced in the seventh inning of Thursday's non-league baseball game at Alumni (soon-to-be-Loftey) Field.

Although his pitcher Bill Sheets had spun a masterful game, Ross coach Dan Fought opted to lift the junior in the top of the seventh.

The move nearly cost the Little Giants the game.

Although Sandusky starter Chuck Willinger labored throughout his complete-game effort, Blue Streaks coach Bill Deming stayed with his man in the bottom of the inning.

That non-move cost Sandusky (1-1) the game, as Wesley

Esquivel drew a bases-loaded walk to claim the Little Giants a 6-5 victory in their season opener.

"We want to get off to a real good start," Fought said. "The first five games, we feel, are very important to us. If we can get on a roll with these young guys and get the confidence level rising, we'll be tough to stop if we get off to a good start."

In his first varsity game, Sheets struck out eight and allowed five hits in 6 2/3 innings. But he could not earn his first varsity victory.

"It's not a win for me, and that's what I really wanted," Sheets said.

After Sheets allowed a two-

out single to No. 9 hitter Matt Martin in the top of the seventh, Fought had catcher Aaron Coonrod shed his gear to try to slam the door.

But Sandusky leadoff hitter Derek Gangloff met Coonrod's first pitch with a line-drive double, his second of the game, to center field that tied the game at 4.

The deciding factor in the change: "The success that the top three guys had against him," Fought said, referring to the combined 4-for-10 day Gangloff, Darcel Irby and Niles Sims posted.

"(Gangloff) hit a real good double the time before, and I thought Billy was getting a little too tired. Plus Cooney had a little bit more heat and I thought he could take care of him."

"I probably out-thought myself."

Complicating the change was that Fought brought Derek Thiessen — gimpy ankle and all — in to catch. A passed ball moved Gangloff to third and a wild pitch gave Sandusky a 5-4 lead.

"Give our kids the credit because we could have packed the bags and went home early, but that wasn't the situation," Deming said.

Darcel Irby walked before Coonrod induced a nearly catastrophic popup to first base as he and Brett Hufford nearly collided on the catch.

In the final Ross rally, Sam Root's leadoff grounder squirt

See ROSS RALLIES, B5

Giants clobber Streaks

News-Messenger reports

SANDUSKY — The Ross Little Giants opened their softball schedule with a bang, crushing soon-to-be Great Lakes League rival Sandusky Thursday.

Jodi Kusmer struck out nine in the one-hit victory.

Ross scored a pair of runs in its first at-bat, then rallied for three in the third and four in the sixth to ice the contest.

"We did a nice job putting the ball into play," Ross coach

SOFTBALL

Cheryl Schell said. "We saw the ball well and had no strikeouts (against Sandusky starter Misty Baranol)."

Michele Smith collected a pair of hits and scored two runs. She and Jodi Fick each had an RBI.

In other games Thursday:

Clyde 11, Tiffin Calvert 1

CLYDE — Amanda Hoffman clubbed a three-run homer in the first inning, and the Fliers went on to defeat Calvert in the non-league game.

Kristi Mounts spun a one-hitter for the victory.

The Fliers (2-0) had four-run rallies in the third and sixth innings.

Christy Nieset added two RBI for Clyde.

Lakota 5, Margaretta 0

RISING SUN — Jenny Bomer had a second-inning RBI single and drew a bases-loaded walk as the Raiders scored three times in the third to take their second victory and spoil the Polar Bears' season-opener.

Winning pitcher Mary Hale (1-0) walked six and allowed three hits but was bailed out by two Lakota double plays.

Jill Flagg also had an RBI single in the second inning, and Jessica Kline also had a bases-loaded walk in the third.

Oak Harbor 7, Lake 1

MILLBURY — Anne Greener and Erin Radsick combined on a three-hitter and Andrea Lajti hit an RBI triple, propelling Oak Harbor past Lake.

Greener (1-0) pitched the first four innings and gave up one unearned run, with five strikeouts and no walks.

"She pitched very well," Oak Harbor coach Kent Whitman said. "She threw the ball hard and had excellent control. She's pitching very well. She had a nice changeup and good control. I'm really happy with her."

Ross rallies, beats Streaks

Continued from B1

ed through third baseman Chris Kurtz's legs. Root stole second on the next pitch before Hufford doubled to right center field to force a 5-5 tie.

Willinger intentionally walked Thiessen, and Mike Hickey, whose fifth-inning homer had given Ross a 4-3 lead, loaded the bases when his grounder eluded shortstop Niles Sims, who had already made three splendid plays.

Following a long conference with Deming and six other players, Willinger stayed on the mound. But he walked Hufford on four pitches, emptying a jubilant Ross dugout.

"If we would have had another fireballing kid like (Ross) had, maybe we would have brought another kid in, too," Deming said. "But that kid's a senior for us, and we had confidence that he could stay out there and still throw."

After allowing a run by walking the first batter he faced in the first inning and Sims' one-out RBI single, Sheets settled into a groove, retiring the next 13-of-15 batters before Gangloff's long double led off the sixth.

Ross took a 2-1 lead in the bot-

tom of the second when Coonrod drove Esquivel in from second and Roy Nino slammed a two-out RBI single off the third base bag.

In the fifth, Hickey lofted a fly ball into the out-blowing wind for his first varsity homer, a two-run blast.

"It was a super job," said Fought, "because the pitch before he was way out front, and this one he sat back and hit it right in stride."

In the top of the sixth, Gangloff advanced to third on a one-out wild pitch after his double. Esquivel misplayed Sims' long fly to right into a two-base error, and Sims scored on James Mason's two-out single off a fatiguing Sheets.

"I was (tired) a little bit," Sheets said. "But I really like to finish the game. But that's all right, we got the win and that's all that counts."

LITTLE GIANTS NOTES: Senior Alex Pate will get the start today against Tiffin Columbian. ... The last meeting between Ross and Sandusky was a 12-9 Blue Streaks win in the 1994 sectional tournament. ... Ross center fielder Travis Johnson will miss at least another week with a second-degree ankle sprain.

BASEBALL

including the two-run homer that staked Margareta to its first-inning lead.

In other action Friday:

Ross 9, Tiffin Columbian 5

Fremont Ross received a sterling middle relief effort from Dan Cobb and came from behind to win its second game in as many days at Alumni Field.

The sophomore right-hander pitched four innings of one-hit relief, allowing the Little Giants to surmount the 4-1 deficit Columbian (1-1) put them in after a 1½ innings.

Ross cut the margin to 4-2 when Wesley Esquivel (2-for-4, two RBI, two runs) scored on a wild pitch before the Little Giants chased Tornadoes starter Andy Hoya (0-1) with a four-run third inning.

In the third, Esquivel had an RBI single, Terry Cisco had a sacrifice fly, and two more runs scored when Roy Nino's grounder to second was booted.

"We scratched for them," Ross coach Dan Fought said. "We made some good contact, and we put pressure on them in the run-

ning game. Tiffin was a little out of sync on their bunt defense and hitting cuts, so we took advantage of the little mistakes they were making."

Esquivel and Coonrod had RBI singles in a three-run Ross sixth.

When Cobb ran out of gas after the sixth inning, Aaron Coonrod mopped up in the seventh.

"It was rally nice to be able to bring back Coonrod in the seventh inning. It just boosted his confidence," Fought said, referring the near-disaster Coonrod and the Little Giants endured in their opener Thursday.

Lakota 20, Clyde 6

KANSAS — The Fliers surrendered 20 or more runs for the second time this week and fell prey to Andy Schumm's 4-for-4, five-RBI performance.

It was Lakota's fourth straight win.

Lakota spotted Clyde (0-3) a 5-0 lead in the top of the third before exploding for six runs in the bottom of the inning, five in the fourth and nine in the fifth.

Adam Gnepper was 3-for-4 with two runs scored, and Dan Burdette went 3-for-3 with two runs.

The Raiders' Jared Lowery got the victory, his second.

Little Giants bobble league opener

By **MICHAEL BOSI**
Staff writer

It was hard to find any logic in the Fremont Ross baseball team's game with Findlay Tuesday afternoon.

First, it didn't quite make sense that the teams even played with Ol' Man Winter still having his fun — in mid-April, we remind you — by dropping snow on the frozen tundra of Alumni Field throughout the game.

Then there was Doc Hershey. Wearing shorts. Not even shivering. Didn't make sense.

And the most mystifying logic was how the usually sure-handed Little Giants (2-1) could turn in a five-error debacle in dropping

BASEBALL

their first Great Lakes League test, 7-1, to the defending league champion Trojans.

In winning its first two games, Ross had committed just three errors.

"That was the difference in the game: we booted and they didn't," Ross coach Dan Fought said after his team fell prey to senior left-hander Chad Curli's four-hit, nine-strikeout gem — a near miracle in a wind chill in the teens.

"They made some real nice plays," Fought said. "We had the opportunities. They made the plays on us, we didn't make the

plays on them."

Findlay (4-1), which has won its first two GLL games, scored three unearned runs in the third inning to build Curli's 4-0 lead.

Curli, already 3-0, threw 94 pitches, 62 for strikes, and walked none. Ross's run, scored by Terry Cisco on Roy Nino's sacrifice fly in the bottom of the third, is the only run Curli has allowed in 17 innings.

"His control was there, and with the weather the way it was we're real pleased," Findlay coach Jack Foltz said.

In the top of the third, Ross third baseman Sam Root made back-to-back errors, and leadoff hitter J.J. Preston (3-for-4, 3

In other action

Oak Harbor won a cold-shortened game against Fremont St. Joe, 4-1, and Port Clinton rallied for 10 runs in the eighth inning to blank Woodmore, 10-0.

Baseball roundup, B3

runs, 2 RBI) made him pay with the second of three singles to make it 3-0.

Two batters later, Curli helped himself with an RBI double to left center field.

"(Monday) we lost to Wapakoneta and we didn't get the key hit so it's just a day-by-day thing," Foltz said.

Findlay took a 5-1 lead in the sixth inning. With pinch runner Matt Hull at second, Brock Porter singled to left. Ross outfielder Derek Thiessen came up firing a bullet, but pitcher Bill Sheets cut the throw off and Hull scored as the Little Giants caught Porter in a rundown between first and second base.

It was the second start that Sheets pitched well enough to win. The junior allowed six hits in six innings and struck out five.

"Sheets threw a nice ballgame," Fought said. "The bottom line is the defense let us down."

Little Giants reliever Dan Cobb

See **FINDLAY, B3**

Findlay defeats Ross

Continued from B1

was met rudely in the top of the seventh inning, as No. 9 hitter Marc Bosworth played the role of the Energizer Bunny on Cobb's first pitch.


His fly ball to left kept going and going and going, landing just beyond the left field fence to make it 6-1. Preston scored Findlay's final run as Brad Pochard's popup to short fell for Ross's fifth error.

"The (errors) hurt big time, and if you're going to win a championship, you've got to win those plays," Fought said. "Thank God it's only the first league game, we've got time to make ground up."

Sounds logical.

LITTLE GIANTS NOTES:

Center fielder Travis Johnson (ankle) missed his third game. ... Root had four of Ross's five errors, including two on the same play in the fifth inning. ... Ross has yet to beat Findlay since the Trojans joined and won the GLL last year. ... Said Fought of the decision to play: "I don't know. Nobody made a decision. I'll take responsibility for it."



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Giants dressed to kill; Streaks stop Rangers

News-Messenger reports

The Fremont Ross baseball team recovered from its first loss of the season with its biggest offensive output, pounding out 12 hits in a 17-2 non-league victory over Margaretta Thursday in a five-inning game at Alumni Field.

The middle of the Little Giants lineup inflicted the most damage. Cleanup hitter Mike Hickey went 4-for-4 with a double, two RBI and three runs. No. 5 hitter Derek Thiessen was 2-for-3, with two doubles, four RBI and four runs. And Wes Esquivel, the No. 6 man, had two hits and two RBI.

"I guess we had our hitting shoes," Ross coach Dan Fought said.

Aaron Coonrod benefitted from the offensive show, earning his second victory in his first start of the season. Coonrod struck out eight and allowed just three hits in four innings. Alex Pate fanned two and walked one in the fifth.

"Coonrod had great velocity, but he missed a lot on his zones," Fought said. "For his first start and being nervous, I was happy. There's a lot of room for improvement, but he did a great job in his first start."

BASEBALL

improve to 2-0.

Hasselbach had three hits, and Devin Pollick had a double and a triple.

Northwood scored six runs in the fourth to take the lead, but St. Joe responded with a two-out rally in the fifth.

Ryan Mezinger got the rally started with an RBI single. After Ben Werling singled, Hasselbach belted his round-tripper.

"He hit the ball real solid," St. Joe coach Rick Barbour said.

In a time change, St. Joe will host Port Clinton in a double-header starting at 1 p.m. Saturday at Conner Park. The game was changed to accommodate SATs.

Woodmore 15, Bettsville 1

WOODVILLE — Woodmore recovered from its first two losses of the season in big fashion.

On the strength of a 15-hit attack — five from Ryan Travis — the Wildcats clobbered Bettsville in non-league action.

Travis also drove in two runs, and Quentin Stang went 3-for-4, with four RBI, as Woodmore improved to 3-2.

Travis, Stang and Nick Don-

home run for the Wildcats.

"It's a good confidence-builder for the kids," Woodmore coach Bruce Hammersmith said. "It should give them a chance to get the confidence back. We had a rough one the other night (a 10-0 loss to Port Clinton Tuesday) and (Thursday) night they had a chance to hit the ball a little better."

Bettsville remained winless in three outings.

In other action Thursday:

Lakota 12, Hopewell-Loudon 0

KANSAS — Lakota scored six runs in the second inning and three pitchers combined on a five-hitter as the Raiders improved to 5-2 with the shutout over the Chieftains (1-9).

Dan Burdette allowed four hits and struck out six for the victory. Jared Lowery worked the fifth and sixth innings, allowing one hit, and Mike Widman mopped up in the seventh.

Beau Parsons went 2-for-3, with two RBI and two runs, for Lakota, which travels to Tiffin to play Calvert today. Lowery also had a pair of hits, including a double and an RBI.

Bellevue 5, Perkins 4

BELLEVUE — Ryan Piscitello went 2-for-4 and drove in two

Sheets shuts down league

News-Messenger reports

OREGON — The Fremont Ross baseball team rode the seven-hit pitching of Billy Sheets for its first Great Lakes League victory — its fourth in five games — Friday as it clobbered Clay, 9-0.

Brett Hufford and Aaron Coonrod each hit their first home runs in support of Sheets (2-1), who struck out seven and escaped jams in the second and third innings with runners at second and third each time.

"Billy Sheets was outstanding," said Ross coach Dan Fought. "He mixed pitches very well. He had hitters off balance. He got ahead in the count and the curveball he was throwing was keeping their hitters in check the whole day."

Ross did not commit an error, its first errorless game of the season, and pounded out 14 hits.

The Little Giants scored single runs in each of the first three innings before adding two in the fourth to make it 5-0.

Sam Root and Mike Hickey each went 2-for-4 with two RBI. Hickey, at shortstop, and second baseman Roy Nino, turned in solid defense.

Coonrod's solo home run ignited a three-run seventh inning, which also featured Root's two-run single.

The Little Giants will travel to Perrysburg today (3 p.m.) to make up Monday's freeze-out.

In other action:

BASEBALL

Lakota 6, Tiffin Calvert 2

TIFFIN — Reliever Adam Gnepper stranded the bases loaded in the third inning and proceeded to hurl 4 2/3 innings of one-hit ball in the Raiders' victory.

With starter Darrin Kistler struggling, Gnepper entered with the score tied at 2 and got the next two batters on a strikeout and fly out.

He helped his own cause with a 2-for-3 effort at the plate. Jon Marshall went 2-for-3, with two RBI and a double.

Lakota went ahead with a three-run fourth inning off Calvert starter Matt Kleinhenz, who gave up five runs and six walks in 3-plus innings.

Cardinal Stritch 6, Old Fort 2

OLD FORT — The Stockaders dropped their fourth straight game after winning opening day, as Stritch's Rocco Donofrio worked five innings of four-hit ball before his team came from behind for the victory.

Old Fort took a 2-0 lead after scoring runs in the second and third innings. In the bottom of the second, Jeff Meeker led off with a single and came around on Cory Murray's groundout. Lucas Cantu singled in Tony Florence in the third inning to give Old Fort starter and loser Ryan Heilman a two-run cushion.

Heilman worked five innings, giving up five hits and four runs.

But Stritch cranked out four hits in the fifth inning when it scored four runs to take the lead.

"We could have won (Friday) night," said Old Fort coach Phil Miller, who lamented his team's offensive output. All six Stockader hits came from the top five slots in the lineup, including two from Eric Miller.

"I think it's probably going to be a problem, but it's a young team," Phil Miller said.

Norwalk 6, Clyde 5

NORWALK — The Fliers dropped their fifth straight game despite a strong pitching performance from Ari Norman. Norwalk scored its winning run in the bottom of the seventh, offsetting a 10-hit Clyde attack.

But the Fliers also committed seven errors.

"It was a game that we could have easily won," Clyde coach Rick Bowerman said. "We didn't have the defense to back up Norman."

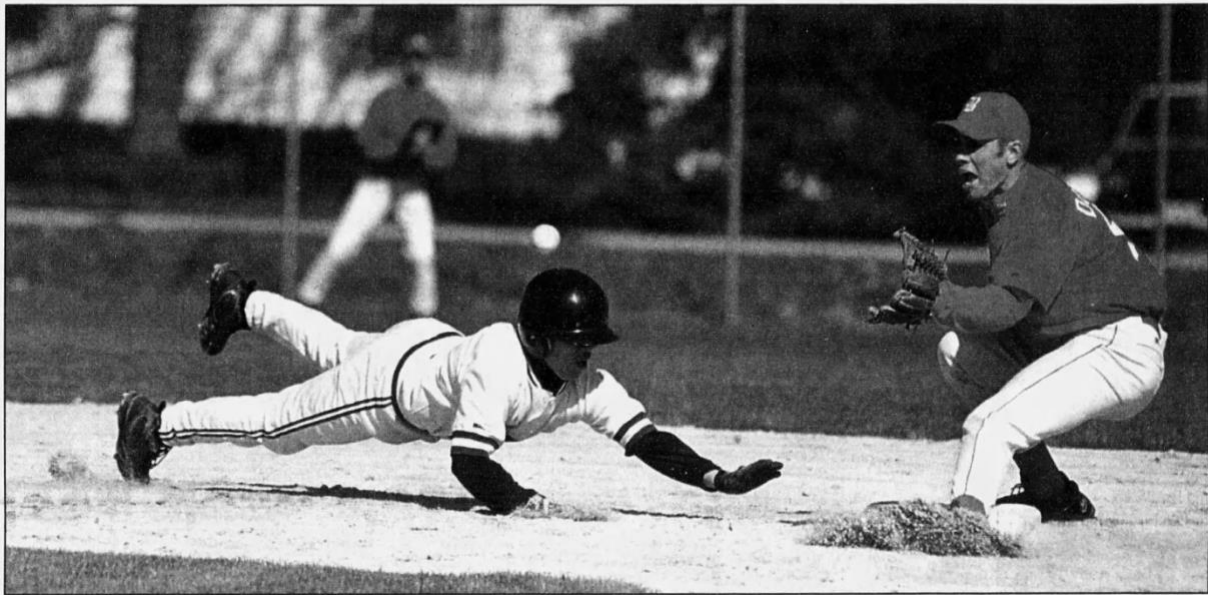
Clyde's Kyle Harris had two hits and two RBI.

St. Wendelin 7, Oak Harbor 4

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Ross ace nearly no-hits Mules



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

ROY NINO of Fremont Ross dives back to second base but is unable to beat the pick off as Bedford's Scott Dukate waits for the ball. Nino had stolen second prior to being picked off.

Streaks defeat St. John's 11-9 in extra innings

News-Messenger reports

TOLEDO — The St. Joseph Central Catholic baseball team scored five runs in the top of the eighth inning — then weathered a three-run St. John's rally — to take a wild 11-9 non-league victory Tuesday.

For coach Rick Barbour, the victory was great.

The heart-attack approach he can live without.

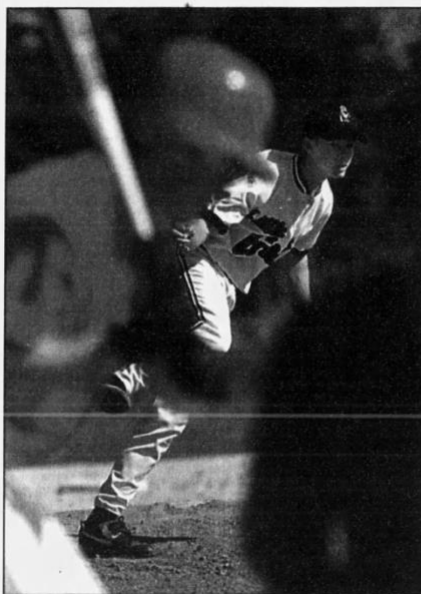
"At least we were on the right end of it," he said. "It was a nice comeback."

St. Joe (6-2), winners of three straight, thought it had wrapped things up when it added to a 3-2 lead by scoring three runs in the top of the seventh.

However, St. John's, which lost for the first time in six games, responded with four runs in the home half of the seventh to send the game into extra innings tied at 6.

The Titans would have won the game if not for Dave Murray's over-the-shoulder catch in right

See WILD WIN, B3



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

ROSS PITCHER Bill Sheets throws during the first inning against Bedford Tuesday. He allowed just one hit in the Little Giants' win.

Sheets tosses second win

By MICHAEL BOSI
Staff writer

You can't always get what you want.

OK, Mick Jagger, but if you're Billy Sheets, you can never get what you want.

In his first start April 3 for the Fremont Ross baseball team, Sheets wanted a complete game badly. He was yanked.

He also wanted a victory that day. Didn't get that either.

In the Little Giants' 5-1 triumph over Bedford Tuesday at Alumni Field, Sheets came within one batter of a no-hitter but gave up a two-out single to No. 9 hitter Nick Francis.

Sheets settled for a one-hitter, giving him two victories in three decisions. The pole position as Ross's staff ace is his.

Upon further review, thou shalt not have pity.

"This is really unexpected," Sheets said after striking out four, walking four and lowering his earned run average to 1.31 as the Little Giants improved to 5-1, 2-1 Great Lakes League with their third straight win.

He was hardly a one-man show. Pesky second baseman Roy

BASEBALL

Nino went 3-for-3, driving in Ross's first run, scoring its third and turning in his now-obligatory flawless fielding. Third baseman Aaron Coonrod atoned for two errors by driving in the go-ahead run with a fifth-inning single.

After transferring to 1100 North St. for his junior year, Nino has made a name for himself quickly.

"In fact," said lame duck head coach Dan Fought, "I kept calling him the man from Texas until he made sure I knew he was from Florida. Roy just carries himself like a ballplayer."

With Terry Cisco on third base in the bottom of the third, Nino fisted a single to right center field to give Ross a 1-0 lead.

Bedford scored its only run and ended Sheets' scoreless inning string at 11 without the benefit of a hit. Losing pitcher Kevin Stock reached on Coonrod's throwing error. After moving to third on a sacrifice and a groundout, Stock scored on Sheets' only boo-boo of the day — a wild pitch.

See SHEETS, B3

Sheets keeps kicking Mules off balance

Continued from B1

Bedford, usually a potent hitting club, has not reached the point of consistency with its bats. Hot one day, frozen pizza the next.

"Just I never know which day it is," said first-year head coach Craig Trychel, whose club dipped to 5-4, 1-2 GLL.

"Billy kept them off balance," Fought said. "(Cleanup hitter Scott) Dukate, he's been a great hitter against us the last four years. He's murdered us up at their place and here in the past, so Billy kept everybody off balance today. It's a tribute to him; he shut down a great hitting ballclub."

Ross tied the game when Coonrod fought off an 0-2 pitch for a slicing single down the rightfield line, scoring Wesley Esquivel from second.

The Little Giants ensured Sheets would get his second victory in two starts with a three-run sixth. Nino led off with a single and scored on a Brett Hufford RBI single. Derek Thiessen followed with a double just inside the third base bag before Michael Hickey made it 5-1 with a sacrifice fly to left.

But someone — or, more precisely several people — jinxed Sheets' piece of history. They

violated a baseball rule and mentioned the no-hitter in the dugout.

"I think Billy would pay attention," Fought said. "He knows everything he's done in a game because that's how conscientious he is. I don't want to talk about it. My wife was talking too much about it. I wasn't going to."

You bet Sheets knew.

"I wanted it pretty bad," he said.

In the top of the seventh, Sheets got No. 8 hitter Brad Lewis to ground out and he fanned Scott Schutt. But Francis turned a fat, down-the-middle fastball into a looping liner that fell in front of Thiessen in short left field.

"I really didn't have my best, but I got the job done," Sheets said, acknowledging nothing out of the ordinary happened to him Thursday — other than that his favorite target, catcher Julian Domeray,

was getting his second start.

Domeray was behind the plate for Sheets' 9-0 win over Clay last week.

"We work better together," Sheets said.

At least he got something he wanted.

LITTLE GIANTS NOTES: Stock, who allowed five runs on six hits, was called for two illegal pitches in the Ross half of the third. Twice, Stock touched his mouth while still toeing the rubber, making both automatic balls. ... Fought, who accepted a head football coaching job at Benjamin Logan, on his players' reaction to the news: "The one thing they told me is 'Go after the dream, good luck and we're going to try to send you out a champion.' The seniors and I are graduating together, so hopefully they and I go out on a positive note."



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Wild pitch costs Ross at Fostoria

News-Messenger reports

FOSTORIA — By season's end, the Fremont Ross baseball team will probably put Friday's Great Lakes League baseball game against Fostoria in the Coulda, Shoulda, Woulda category.

The game could have been won. But Billy Sheets' seventh-inning wild pitch sent the Red-men to the upside of 3-2 decision.

The game should have been won. But for the first time this season, Ross did not receive clutch hitting with runners on base.

The hard-luck loser was Ross's Dan Cobb (1-1). In his first start, Cobb allowed four hits and struck out eight in 6 1/3 innings.

"He did a terrific job," Fought said.

Ross tied the game at 2 in the fifth inning when Sam Root's sacrifice fly scored Terry Cisco (2-for-3), who led off with a double.

The Little Giants (5-2, 2-2 GLL) watched an opportunity slip away in the sixth when winning pitcher Mike Hendley, who went the distance, kept Michael Hickley at second base after a leadoff double.

In the bottom of the seventh, Fostoria's No. 6 hitter, Aaron Wagner, reached on second baseman Roy Nino's first error of the season. After a sacrifice that moved Wagner to second, Sheets relieved Cobb. On a groundout, Wagner advanced to third before Sheets allowed him to score with a wild pitch.

Bellevue 6, Galion 0
BELLEVUE — If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

That's why Bellevue coach Brian Schubert allowed a pitcher complete a game for the first time this season, as B.J. Brown went the distance for a victory over Galion.

"He was pretty strong, and I got burned last week," Schubert said after Brown's two-hitter.

BASEBALL

"We had a 3-0 lead against Margaretta — and I've got six guys who are pretty equal and I'm going to need them out of the bullpen — and I brought a guy in and he didn't get out the inning."

"B.J. was throwing good and he wasn't really tired. It wasn't really cold either."

Brown, who struck out nine and walked five in improving to 3-0, was aided by Mike Artino's solo homer that led off the second inning and Chad Cramer's solo blast leading off the fourth.

Artino's home run was his second; Cramer's his first.

Ahead 1-0 against losing pitcher Matt Pawsey, Bellevue scored three times in the third inning, highlighted by Joe Sanchez's two-run double.

Galion dropped to 8-2, and the loss was its first in the Northern Ohio League, in which it has gone 3-1.

"This is probably our best team win and probably our best game we put together for a full six or seven innings this year," said Schubert said, whose team is 7-0.

Edison 7, Oak Harbor 1
OAK HARBOR — Josh Goodwin pitched a three-hitter and struck out nine with four walks as the Chargers handed the Rockets their second straight Sandusky Bay Conference loss.

Junior Jacob Radsick had all three hits for Oak Harbor, 3-7 and 1-2 in the SBC. The Rockets' lone run came in the fifth inning, when Radsick scored on wild pitch.

Margaretta 6, Port Clinton 4
CASTALIA — Port Clinton mustered just two hits, including a double by Ryan Barth, in the SBC loss to the Polar Bears.

Dave Hammack (2-2) took the loss despite allowing just six hits. Mike Reichman drove in a run for PC.

B.J. Thomas earned the win for Margaretta, 2-3 and 1-1.

Woodmore 2, Northwood 0
WOODVILLE — Mike Cairns pitched a one-hitter and struck out eight, with one walk for Woodmore, 5-4 and 2-3 in the SLL.

"He had a heck of a game," Woodmore coach Bruce Hammersmith said. "He mixed his pitches and pitched a good game."

The Wildcats scored a pair of unearned runs in the fifth inning off Brad Goekerman, who gave up two hits, struck out four and walked three.

Otsego 17, Lakota 4
KANSAS — The Raiders fell prey to Curt Hartman's 4-for-5, six-RBI performance as they lost their fourth straight Suburban Lakes League game.

Shawn Babcock had two hits and three RBI — all in Lakota's four-run second inning that brought it within 5-4. But Otsego responded with five runs in the fourth inning to take an 11-4 advantage.

Sandusky St. Mary's 7, Clyde 6
SANDUSKY — Sandusky St. Mary's scored one run in its final at bat to beat Clyde, which remains winless.

The Fliers scored two runs in the top of the sixth to take a 6-4 lead, only to have the Panthers tie the game in the bottom half of the inning. St. Mary's held Clyde scoreless in the seventh before winning the Sandusky Bay Conference matchup.

Mohawk 6, Old Fort 5
OLD FORT — Old Fort scored two runs in the seventh inning to tie the game, only to have Mohawk score in its last at bat for a 6-5 win. The Stockaders remained winless in the Midland Athletic League despite allowing just five hits to the Warriors.

"We improved over what we have been playing in our last few games," Old Fort coach Phil Miller said.

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inning the Sandusky Bay Con-
ference matchup.

Mohawk 6, Old Fort 5
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Ross 10, Napoleon 4

Billy Sheets had a career-high 11 strikeouts and got the benefit of a 13-hit attack as the Fremont Ross baseball team hammered Napoleon, 10-4, Tuesday at Alumni Field.

The junior right-hander upped his record to 3-1. He allowed nine hits, six for extra bases, and walked none.

Sam Root went 2-for-3, including a second-inning double that gave Ross a 3-1 lead against losing pitcher Adam Vance, who endured a complete-game loss.

"The timely hitting came back and that was the big advantage," said Ross coach Dan Fought.

A throwing error opened the door for Ross's three-run third inning, and the Little Giants (6-2, 3-2 Great Lakes League) scored four times in the sixth. Brett Hufford's two-run double highlighted that rally.

"It's a very satisfying way to come back after a tough loss last Friday (at Fostoria)," Fought said. "It puts us back into the upper echelon of the league."

Root drives in winning score

News-Messenger reports

The Fremont Ross baseball team tuned up for Friday's Great Lakes League showdown at Whitmer by beating a team it may see in the sectional tournament, Mansfield Madison, 7-6, in eight innings Wednesday.

Sam Root's second hit, Ross's ninth of the day, was a one-out single that scored Terry Cisco from second base in the bottom of the eighth.

"It's a quality win against a quality opponent," Ross coach Dan Fought said, "and it gives us that confidence we need going against the big dog on Friday."

Down 4-0, Ross began its comeback quest with a three-run fourth inning, and the Little Giants tied the game at 5 on Roy Nino's two-run single in the sixth.

Derek Thiessen led off the bottom of the seventh with a walk, advanced on a balk and a passed ball and tied the game when he scored on one of Wesley Esquivel's two doubles.

Esquivel went 3-for-4 with three RBI and two runs scored.

Ross reliever Alex Pate got the last out of the top of the eighth with runners at first and second to earn his first victory.

Aaron Coonrod had a shaky start, giving up five runs and seven walks in six innings. But he reentered the game to get the first two outs of the eighth.

Dan Cobb allowed Madison's run in the top of the seventh but also escaped a bases-loaded jam.

BASEBALL

the hitting stays strong. We've got a lot of good hitting."

After Gruss's home run, Kayden allowed just one more hit, Tim Schumm's leadoff single in the fourth, as he improved to 4-1. Kayden struck out five and walked one.

St. Joe will continue its game with Old Fort today at Conner Park. The game was held up April 16 by rain with the Streaks ahead, 1-0.

Gibsonburg 5, Lakota 3

KANSAS — Larry LaSalvia went 3-for-4 and the Golden Bears scored four runs in the top of the seventh inning to take a Suburban Lakes League victory over Lakota.

Nick Jurski got the win for Gibsonburg, which crept back over the .500 mark at 5-4, 2-3 SLL.

Dan Burdette took the loss for the Raiders (7-7, 0-6 SLL).

Oak Harbor 17, Clyde 2

OAK HARBOR — Brian Schimmoller hit a two-run homer and singled while Curt Benner doubled twice and drove in three runs, leading Oak Harbor to a Sandusky Bay Conference victory over Clyde.

The Rockets, who ended a two-game losing streak, collected a season-high 14 hits.

"It was nice to see them go out after it and nice to see them get on the winning track again," Oak Harbor coach Tim Laderach said. "Clyde didn't hit the ball

Ross wilts at Whitmer

News-Messenger reports

Same story. Different season. Fremont Ross continues to chase Toledo Whitmer for the top spot in the Great Lakes League. This time, the baseball team fell prey to the Panthers, dropping a 7-4 decision Friday.

Whitmer, which laid claim to the football and basketball league titles, roughed up Ross

BASEBALL

starter Bill Sheets for four runs in the first two innings before Sheets departed with a sore shoulder.

The Panthers (14-1, 6-0 GLL) got a leadoff home run from Brandon Hartsel to make it 2-0 and ignite a three-run second inning. Adam Leal also homered.

The Little Giants (7-3, 3-3 GLL) got as close as 4-3 by scoring three times in the fourth inning.

Michael Hickey, whose single to left field bounced off the left fielder's face, scored Ross's first run when Wesley Esquivel reached on an error. One out later, Julian Domiray, whose 2-for-3 performance included a seventh-inning solo home run, doubled home Esquivel and scored on Terry Cisco's single. Cisco was thrown out trying to stretch his hit at second base, ending a possibly bigger Ross rally.

"The bottom line is when you're taking on the champion and they leave themselves open for the shot, you've got to hit them with the knockout punch," said Ross coach Dan Fought.

In other action"

Woodward players face charges

Associated Press

CINCINNATI — Three high school students face assault charges alleging that they participated in beating up members of another school's baseball team on the ballfield after a game Tuesday.

The three Woodward High School students were charged Thursday. A 17-year-old player, accused of starting the attack against the Mount Healthy High School team as the players shook hands after Tuesday's game, is charged as a juvenile with two counts of felonious assault.

"We've got the main guy charged," police officer John Thornton said.

Charged with misdemeanor assault were a 16-year-old member of the team and a 14-year-old who, police said, ran out of the stands to join the brawl.

The brawl sent at least four Mount Healthy players to hospitals. One player's jaw was broken, another suffered a broken nose and a third sustained a concussion.

Cincinnati school district officials have canceled the remainder of the winless Woodward Bulldogs' season and begun expulsion proceedings against eight Woodward High students, including six players.

Prosecutors could seek to try the 17-year-old as an adult. If that request is made and the Hamilton County Juvenile Court approves, the boy could go to prison if convicted as an adult.

Pollick's two-out triple in the fourth scored the eventual game-winning run, and he rode home on Aaron Pollick's single to give St. Joe a 4-1 cushion.

That spoiled a strong outing by Genoa's Jeremy Renninger (2-3), who went the distance and gave up nine hits.

Devon Pollick escaped a first-and-third, one-out jam in the sixth and escaped the seventh with two runners in scoring position by striking out the last batter.

Scott Reineck had two hits and Bobby Druckenmiller also had a pair, including a first-inning, one-out triple that drove in his team's first run.

With two out in the bottom of the seventh, Nick Dangler tried to score from third on a passed ball but was out on a disputed call.

Aaron Lawniczak pitched the final two innings to preserve the victory for Jeremiah Drake, who struck out seven in five innings.

Mike Cairns (3-2) was the hard-luck loser for Woodmore (7-6). The lefty fired a two-hitter and struck out six.

Gibsonburg 13, Elmwood 10

BLOOMDALE — Gibsonburg (6-5, 3-4 SLL) batted around during a seven-run fourth inning and scored four more times in the sixth for a 13-10 win against Elmwood.

six in the fifth to tie the game at 8-8.

Gibsonburg drew three walks to start the sixth, and Larry LaSalvia hit an RBI single to put the Bears in front for good. Doug Miller (2-for-3, 3 RBI) followed with a two-run double and Brian Riedmaier added an RBI single to seal the win.

Oak Harbor 12, St. Mary's 4

SANDUSKY — Jon Fitz fired five innings of one-hit ball and helped his own cause with a home run and three RBI as the Rockets (5-7) won their second in a row at St. Mary's.

Brian Schimoeller had three hits, including a home run, and three RBI, and Tyson Smith and Nathan Gaines each had a pair of hits.

Lake 8, Lakota 4

KANSAS — Winning pitcher Matt Dissett homered and had three RBI as the Flyers (7-8) dropped Lakota to its seventh SLL loss.

Edison 3, Clyde 1

MILAN — Ari Norman was the hard-luck loser as his team mustered just three hits off winning pitcher Mike Leimeister.

The Fliers fell to 1-11, 1-5 SBC, while Edison improved to 6-5, 4-2 SBC.

Leimeister lost his shutout bid when Brett Ritchey produced Clyde's run with a seventh-inning base hit.

"Ari Norman pitched a good game," said Clyde coach Rick Bowerman. "We are a young team, hopefully we can turn things around."

Bucyrus 1, Bellevue 0

BASEBALL

Ryan Mezinger reached on an infield error.

Devin Pollick went the distance and allowed five hits for his fourth victory.

"I thought we'd come back, but you never know," St. Joe coach Rick Barbour said. "Devin pitched a solid game all the way and it feels good to get back."

Bowling Green 7, Ross 6

BOWLING GREEN — Tony Szymczak's second hit of the day won the game in the bottom of the seventh as Bowling Green defeated Ross after blowing a 3-0 lead.

The Little Giants (7-4) battled to tie the game at 6 in the top of the seventh when Derek Thiessen lofted a Texas League single into short left center field to score Roy Nino and Sam Root.

"We did a nice job at fighting back into it," Ross coach Dan Fought said. "It was nice to tie it up and hopefully send it into extra innings."

But Szymczak made a losing pitcher out of Dan Cobb, who hurled 3 $\frac{1}{3}$ strong innings of long relief after starter Alex Pate was

shelled for six runs in 2 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings.

Pate walked six batters and four scored. He spotted the Bobcats (8-10) a 3-0 lead on Nick Murray's first-inning three-run homer.

"The walks hurt (Pate) tremendously," Fought said.

Bowling Green scored three runs in the third inning before Cobb stranded the bases loaded.

Ross got back within 6-4 on Brett Hufford's two-run triple in the fifth inning.

Monroeville 13, Old Fort 10

OLD FORT — The Stockaders post a season-high runs total but lost for the 13th time in 15 games.

After Old Fort took a 3-0 lead in the first inning, Monroeville pushed four runs across in the second and three in the third and had an 11-3 lead before the Stockaders scored four in the fifth.

"Were starting to score," said Old Fort coach Phil Miller, whose team has scored 19 runs in the last two games.

"I think the last three or four ballgames — the last two in particular, the kids seemed to have turned the corner as far as the offense goes."

But five unearned runs worked against Old Fort and losing

Blechinger and Travis each had singles and each had three RBI.

"Blechinger's and Travis' home runs were big hits for us," Woodmore coach Bruce Hammersmith said.

Gibsonburg's Doug Miller had a double and a triple.

Ross at Findlay, ppd. rain

FINDLAY — The Little Giants trailed 4-3 and were at the mercy of a commanding pitching performance from Chad Curliss when rain halted the game after four innings.

No resumption date has been set.

Curliss, a lefty who entered the game with a 5-1 record, 2.39 ERA and 53 strikeouts in 36 innings, fanned eight Ross hitters.

"He was mowing us down. He had a good fastball going and good location on it," Ross coach Dan Fought said.

The Little Giants (7-4, 3-3 Great Lakes League) scored their runs in the first inning on Brett Hufford's two-run triple and Michael Hickey's sacrifice fly.

Findlay (12-4, 6-1 GLL), which entered Friday tied with Whitmer for the league lead, tied the game at 3 in the bottom of the

first against Billy Sheets.

Nick Evans had an RBI single and two runs scored when Nick Lunn reached on an error. Sheets got a strikeout and groundout to strand two runners on base.

Sheets also left the bases loaded in the third inning.

Findlay took the lead in the fourth inning on two Ross errors. An error allowed J.J. Preston to reach to lead off the inning, and he scored when catcher Julian Domiray's throw on an Evans bunt sailed into right field.

The Little Giants are scheduled to play a makeup game at Perrysburg this morning at 10.

Eagles seize chance to beat Little Giants

News-Messenger reports

Fremont Ross gave Oregon Clay several chances to beat them, and the Eagles obliged with a nine-run outburst in the sixth inning.

Clay took advantage of five Ross errors to beat the Little Giants, 14-9, in a Great Lakes League game at Alumni Field.

Ross (7-5, 3-4 GLL) led 7-5 after five innings, but that's when, "all heck broke loose," said Ross coach Dan Fought.

Four of the Eagles' nine sixth-inning runs off losing pitcher Dan Cobb (2-3) were unearned, as were the three Clay scored in the second inning.

"Cobb was outstanding until the sixth ... we just made him throw too many pitches," Fought said.

The teams combined for 25 hits — including nine doubles.

"It was really good hitting on both sides," Ross coach Dan Fought said. "It wasn't anything that the pitchers weren't doing."

Derek Thiessen led the Ross attack by going 3-for-3 with two doubles, and Aaron Coonrod added a double and single. Nine Ross batters collected at least one hit.

With the win, Clay improves to 10-5 (4-4 GLL).

In other action:

St. Wendelin 16, Old Fort 5

OLD FORT — The Midland Athletic League-leading Mohawks unleashed a 12-hit attack and took advantage of four Old Fort errors to remain unbeaten in the league.

"We played like we have all

BASEBALL

year, made a few too many errors and had too many walks," Old Fort coach Phil Miller said.

Old Fort scored first and took a 2-0 lead after one inning, but St. Wendelin added a run in the second and broke away with a four-run third.

Josh Yost capped the third-inning rally with a one-out three-run home run, his second of the season.

"That sort of broke out backs," Miller said.

Aaron Burks (0-2), making his second start, took the loss.

Old Fort's Tony Florence had a pair of leadoff doubles and scored both times.

The Stockaders fell to 2-16, 0-9 MAL.

Gibsonburg 12, Lake 5

GIBSONBURG — Nick Jurski struck out seven for his fifth victory as the Golden Bears downed Lake in a Suburban Lakes League game.

Gibsonburg (11-6, 5-5 SLL) erased a 2-1 deficit with an eight-run fourth inning.

Doug Miller and Jeff Wassil each had three hits, and the Golden Bears finished with 10.

Miller had a home run and drove in three runs, and Wassil scored three times. Larry LaSalvia added two RBI.

"We had timely hitting," Gibsonburg coach Jack Kaemming said. "It was a great team effort."

Jurski was aided by a pair of double plays.

Pate helps Ross kick its losing habit against Mules

News-Messenger reports

TEMPERANCE, Mich. — The Fremont Ross baseball team snapped a three-game, 16-day losing streak with a 6-5 victory over Great Lakes League rival Bedford in eight innings Friday.

Sam Root went 2-for-4 and drove in the winning run with a sacrifice fly that scored Julian Domiray in the eighth.

The Little Giants (8-5, 4-4 GLL) maintained their .500 mark in the GLL, while Bedford slipped to 11-9, 4-5 GLL.

"It feels like (the losing streak) lasted forever because it's been

BASEBALL

over the last two weeks and the games have been so spread out," Ross coach Dan Fought said.

"It's probably good that we have had it all spread out, though, because we had been playing so poorly as a team that we might have been under .500 by now. It was a blessing in disguise in that it's given us time to work out some kinks."

The Kicking Mules erased a 5-2 Ross lead with a three-run seventh inning that could have pro-

duced the winning run had Little Giants reliever Alex Pate (2-0) not stranded the bases loaded.

Nick Francis brought Bedford within 5-3 with a squeeze bunt and Scott Schutt followed with a two-run single to tie the game. Billy Sheets hit the next batter, Kevin Stock, before Fought lifted Sheets in favor of Pate.

Pate walked the first batter to load the bases before getting a popup and a fly out.

He retired the side in order in the eighth.

"It's really nice for something like this to happen with Alex Pate

because he's worked so hard in the four years he's been with me," Fought said.

Sheets gave up five runs in four innings in relief of starter Aaron Coonrod, who left after 2 1/3 innings with elbow soreness.

Coonrod went 2-for-3, with an RBI in a three-run Ross third inning, and Terry Cisco went 2-for-4, including a triple that led off Ross's two-run fourth.

In other games:

Bellevue 4, Shelby 0

BELLEVUE — It took five days to complete, but the Red-men finally shut out Shelby in a

Northern Ohio League game.

Ed Baptista earned his fourth victory in a game that was halted after one inning Monday. Baptista went five innings, allowing one hit and striking out seven.

Joe Sanchez and Paul Cornwell each pitched one scoreless inning of relief.

"Ed threw well," Bellevue coach Brian Schubert said. "We haven't had a lot of games and I'm going to need Joe and Paul to pitch in the next two weeks, and I wanted to get them a little work."

See GIBSONBURG, B2

Little Giants settle for split with Arrows

Golden Bears nip Lakota; 'Cats lose two

News-Messenger reports

ASHLAND — Fremont Ross, playing its only non-league doubleheader of the season, split a pair of games with Ashland Saturday afternoon.

The Little Giants survived a five-run seventh-inning rally by the Arrows to win the first game 13-9 but dropped the nightcap 8-2.

In the opener, Ross used a nine-run fifth inning to take a 12-0 lead and held on at the end. Ashland outhit the Little Giants 11-8.

Brett Hufford went 2-for-4 with a double and one RBI, while Julian Domiray and Terry Cisco both went 2-for-3 with one RBI apiece to lead Ross.

Alex Pate (3-0), a senior right-hander, pitched 6½ innings and gave up nine runs (five earned) on 10 hits, with five walks and one strikeout to earn the win. Terry Cisco recorded the last two outs, giving up one hit.

Cisco suffered the loss in the second game as the Little Giants committed five errors and fell to 11-6 on the season. The Arrows are 13-7.

Hufford went 2-for-2 with a double, Wesley Esquivel went 2-for-3 with one RBI and Billy Sheets had a sacrifice fly in the fourth inning to pace the Ross offense.

Cisco (0-1) went the first three innings and took the loss. He allowed six runs (four earned) on four hits and four walks, with two strikeouts.

The Little Giants host Fostoria today (4:30 p.m.).

PREP BASEBALL

maier went 4-for-4 with one RBI and scored the game-winning run with two outs in the bottom of the seventh for Gibsonburg, 15-8 and 8-7 in the Suburban Lakes League.

Lakota fell to 11-14 and 3-12 in the SLL after getting outhit 10-3. Jared Lowery (4-2) took the loss.

Nick Jurski (8-1) won in relief, pitching 1½ innings and allowing no hits and three walks, with four strikeouts.

Nick Kaemming had three hits, scored a run and drove in one run and Jeff Wassil had one RBI for the Golden Bears.

Lakota hosts Eastwood today.

Monroeville 8, Bettsville 7

MONROEVILLE — The host Eagles swept two games from Bettsville, winning 10-5 and notching an 8-7 win in eight innings in the completion of a suspended game.

In the suspended game, Bettsville's Shaun Kimmet hit a two-run homer in the seventh inning to tie the game at 7-7.

Mike Knisely and Nick Steffanni had two RBIs each for the Bobcats.

In the second game, Bettsville fell to 3-19 despite scoring twice in the seventh inning on Kimmet's two-run double. Mon-

Napoleon beats Ross with last-inning homer

News-Messenger reports

NAPOLEON — Napoleon's Todd Kruse homered to lead off the bottom of the seventh, spoiling a Fremont Ross comeback attempt and giving the Wildcats a 5-4 Great Lakes League baseball victory Thursday.

After the Little Giants (11-8, 4-5 GLL) tied the game at 4 on Derek Thiessen's RBI single off reliever Adam Vance, Napoleon (14-13, 2-9 GLL) won when Kruse put a full-count pitch from Ross's Dan Cobb into orbit.

"It was smoked, unfortunately for Danny, because he pitched a terrific ballgame," Ross coach Dan Fought said.

In his second straight complete game, Cobb (3-4) allowed six hits and just one earned run.

Napoleon scored three runs in the fifth, marked by a catcher's interference call, two singles and Jeremy Desgranges' two-run triple, for a 4-0 lead.

Ross whittled within 4-2 in the sixth, as Wesley Esquivel drew a

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bases-loaded walk off starter Nick Daman and Aaron Coonrod produced a run with a fielder's choice.

The loss was Ross's second in a row, and sends the Little Giants hobbling into today's game with GLL leader and No. 2-ranked Toledo Whitmer. Whitmer fell out of district contention Thursday when it dropped a 10-4 decision to Toledo Start.

"This is the perfect opportunity to get Whitmer," Fought said. "No. 1, they'll be mad, and making the trip down here they might be super motivated. It would be a great opportunity."

In other action:

Bellevue 7, Upper Sandusky 4

BELLEVUE — Bellevue scored four times in the fourth inning to break open a 3-3 game and held on to beat Upper Sandusky 7-4.

Ben Bollenbacher, Mike Artino

and Jeremy Swartz each doubled and singled for the Redmen, who play Galion today in the Division II District Championship at Sandusky.

"It's a good confidence builder going into districts," Bellevue coach Brian Schubert said.

Lakota 9, Eastwood 2

KANSAS — Mark Adams doubled and John Sander drove in two runs as Lakota finished the season with a 9-2 win against Eastwood.

The Raiders (12-14) scored seven times in the fourth inning and added two in the fifth. Lakota had 10 hits.

Northwood 17, Woodmore 2

NORTHWOOD — Northwood scored 17 runs on 15 hits in five innings against Woodmore in a 17-2 win.

The Rangers led 4-2 before adding 13 runs in its last three at bats.

Woodmore plays Gibsonburg today for the Division IV District Championship at Old Fort.

The News-Messenger, Fremont, Ohio, Wednesday, May 28, 1997

SPORTS **B3**

Ross wins home finale with suicide squeeze

News-Messenger reports

Michael Hickey executed a one-out suicide squeeze in the bottom of the eighth inning to give Fremont Ross a 6-5 victory over Fostoria in its Alumni Field finale Tuesday.

It was also the last home game for outgoing coach Dan Fought, who will skipper his final Ross game Thursday, when the Little Giants travel to Findlay to complete a suspended game.

"Joe Lotycz would be proud," Fought said of how the late, popular school equipment manager

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would have reacted to Tuesday's win.

In the eighth, Derek Thiessen led off with an infield single to deep short. He stole second and took third when the throw bounced into center field. On the second pitch from Mike Headley, who went the distance, Hickey laid down the squeeze bunt to end it.

That saved the Little Giants (12-9, 5-6 GLL) from falling prey to

their own six errors.

"Maybe we weren't focused enough," Fought said. "It wasn't any lazy play. I didn't see the focus."

Hickey's heroics also made a winner out of Dan Cobb (3-4), who pitched four innings in relief of Alex Pate.

The Little Giants claimed a 4-1 lead, helped in part by Derek Thiessen's inside-the-park home run in the first inning. Thiessen went 3-for-4, scored three runs and stole three bases.

But two errors in the fifth

inning led to three unearned runs for the Redmen (7-14, 2-9 GLL), and another pair of miscues allowed Fostoria to take a 5-4 lead in the sixth.

Leadoff hitter Roy Nino, however, saved Ross from a loss when he tied the game in the bottom of the seventh.

Julian Domiray drew a leadoff walk and advanced to second on Terry Cisco's sacrifice bunt. On an 0-and-2 pitch, Nino (2-for-4) belted a single to right field for his second RBI.

In other action:

Bellevue 11, Norwalk 6

BELLEVUE — Jeremy Swartz's two-out triple scored the go-ahead runs in Bellevue's 11-6 Northern Ohio League win against Norwalk.

The victory left Bellevue (17-3, 10-2 NOL) needing a win against Tiffin Columbian today or Willard Thursday to earn a share of the league championship. Wins in both games would give the Redmen an outright title.

Bellevue's Chad Cramer hit a two-run home run in the third inning to give the Redmen a 6-4 lead, but Norwalk scored twice in

the top of the fifth inning to tie the game at 6.

After David Falkner and Cramer reached base on errors in the bottom of the sixth, Swartz hit the two-run triple to give his team the edge.

Winning pitcher Mike Artino (5-1) added a three-run home run in the sixth.

Today's game is at Tiffin Columbian, a team the Redmen beat 4-2 earlier in the season. Bellevue beat Willard 4-1 this season and host the Crimson Flashes Thursday.

Findlay ace outduels Sheets in GLL game

FINDLAY — **Billy Sheets** allowed just one earned run but lost Friday as Fremont Ross was defeated by Findlay, 4-3, in a Great Lakes League game.

The Little Giants (12-10, 5-7 GLL) scored three runs in the first inning, as did the Trojans. Findlay added the go-ahead run in the fourth.

Chad Curtis struck out 11 Ross batters for the win.

"Billy Sheets pitched a great game against one of the best pitchers in the GLL," Ross coach Dan Fought said.

Sheets had four strikeouts and three walks.

Brett Hufford went 2 for 3 with 2 RBIs and a triple for Ross.