

Little Giants' Tournament Run Ends

HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL

Little Giants' rally for naught as Ashland wins

By JEFF ARENZ

Sports Writer

MANFIELD — Zach Sidle played the role of spoiler for the Fremont Ross varsity baseball team.

Sidle's two-run home run in the top of the seventh inning broke a tie and turned out to be the decisive blow as No. 4-seeded Ashland overcame No. 3-seeded Ross 6-4 in a Division I sectional semifinal game at Mansfield Madison on Wednesday.

Ashland (8-14 overall) advances to play No. 2-seeded Marion Harding (12-10) at 5 p.m. today. Little Giants pitcher

Ryan Damman, who entered the seventh inning after hurling two scoreless frames in relief of Ross starter Cody Foos, forced Evan Dix into hitting fly ball to center field for the first out. Then, on a 1-2 pitch, Damman's delivery to Justin Stewart was grounded sharply to Little Giants' first baseman Brad Wolschlag, who misplayed the ball for an error.

Sidle stroled to the plate and worked the count to 3-2 before blasting a pitch from Damman over the wall in deep left-center field to break the 4-4 tie.

"He hit a good pitch," Damman said of his offer-



MENDOZA

ing to Sidle. The loss was heart-breaking for Ross (12-13), which has won seven of its last 10 games

and rallied from a 4-0 deficit after four innings against Ashland.

Stewart, the Arrows' cleanup hitter, drove in Ashland's first four runs. In the first, his sacrifice fly plated Brandon Nalley as the Arrows grabbed a 1-0 lead. In the third, Josh

Gangi and Nalley reached before Stewart smacked a two-out, three-run homer to center field on the first pitch he saw from Foos.

"It was nice to be able to play with a little bit of a lead, and Justin was able to give that to us," said Ashland coach Harley Eichhorn. "Justin has been hitting around the low .400s for us of late, and Sidle has also come around for us."

"Most of their runs came from home runs," said Ross coach Mark King. "Their kids got to hit a few pitches that were up in the strike zone, and they were no-doubters."

The Little Giants broke

up Greg Heinz's shutout in the fifth on a one-out, bases-loaded single to center field by Jared King. Jake Hiestand scored before Ross ran itself into a double play as Damman slipped and fell after rounding third and Stephen Stout, a trailing runner, was caught off second.

It was the second of four double plays Ashland turned against the Little Giants. In the second, Josh Mendoza began the frame with a double and went to third on Mykel Heberling's single. After Derek Aldrich lifted a fly ball that was caught in right field, Mendoza tried to score, but was

tagged out the plate.

"You can't have multiple runners on base in almost every inning and not be able to score," Coach King said.

Trailing 4-1 in the sixth, Ross received back-to-back singles from Wolschlag and Mendoza. With one out, Aldrich drew a walk to load the bases before a free pass to Hiestand sent Wolschlag home. Damman followed with a two-run single to right field that tied the game at 4 as Mendoza and Aldrich crossed the plate.

"He threw me a curveball on the outside corner

Homer sinks Ross

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of the plate," Damman said of the pitch he hit for a 4-all tie. "I was able to bloop it over the first baseman's head."

"We felt like we could come back because we did a few times during the year. All we had to was give ourselves a chance to win, and that came in the sixth inning," he said.

Eichhorn brought Anthony Fairhurst to the mound to relieve Heinz, who pitched into and out of trouble in four of his 5 1/3 innings. After Fairhurst walked Stout, Foos lined into an inning-ending double play.

Heinz allowed four runs on six hits

with four walks and three strikeouts in earning a no-decision. In 2/3 of an inning, Fairhurst walked one and picked up the victory.

In the seventh, the Little Giants placed Mendoza at first and Jared King third with one out, but Dix, who was Ashland's third pitcher of the game, ended Heberling to hit into a game-ending twin-killing for a save.

"We dodged a bullet in the last two innings," Eichhorn said.

Foos pitched the first four innings for Ross, allowing four runs on three hits with two walks and five strikeouts.

E-mail Jeff Arenz at jarenz@freemont.gannett.com.

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