

Defense deserts Ross

By **BOB MARKER**
Sports Editor

ASHLAND — Reveille didn't awaken the Strongsville Mustangs in the Division I tournament against Fremont Ross, but a triple did.

Fremont Ross shortstop Dawn Zerman ironically supplied the triple, which spurred the Mustangs to a 5-3 victory over the Little Giants.

Before Zerman's hit, Strongsville coach Dawn Rue Bensaal admitted she had "not even heard of them (the Little Giants) before."

"When she (Zerman) tagged that ball, I thought, 'Well, if this is their first batter, I can't imagine what else they have for us,' Rue Bensaal said. "It really woke us up and we played a little more deeper and a little more conservatively."

Five Little Giant errors helped Strongsville (23-1) advance to today's 1 p.m. championship game against three-time state champion Akron Springfield (28-1). Springfield defeated Toledo Notre Dame 8-3 in the other semi-final Friday.

Mustang freshman Becky Gray, who survived a nine-hit Ross attack, will face Springfield senior Alanna Barker — 90-3 in four years.

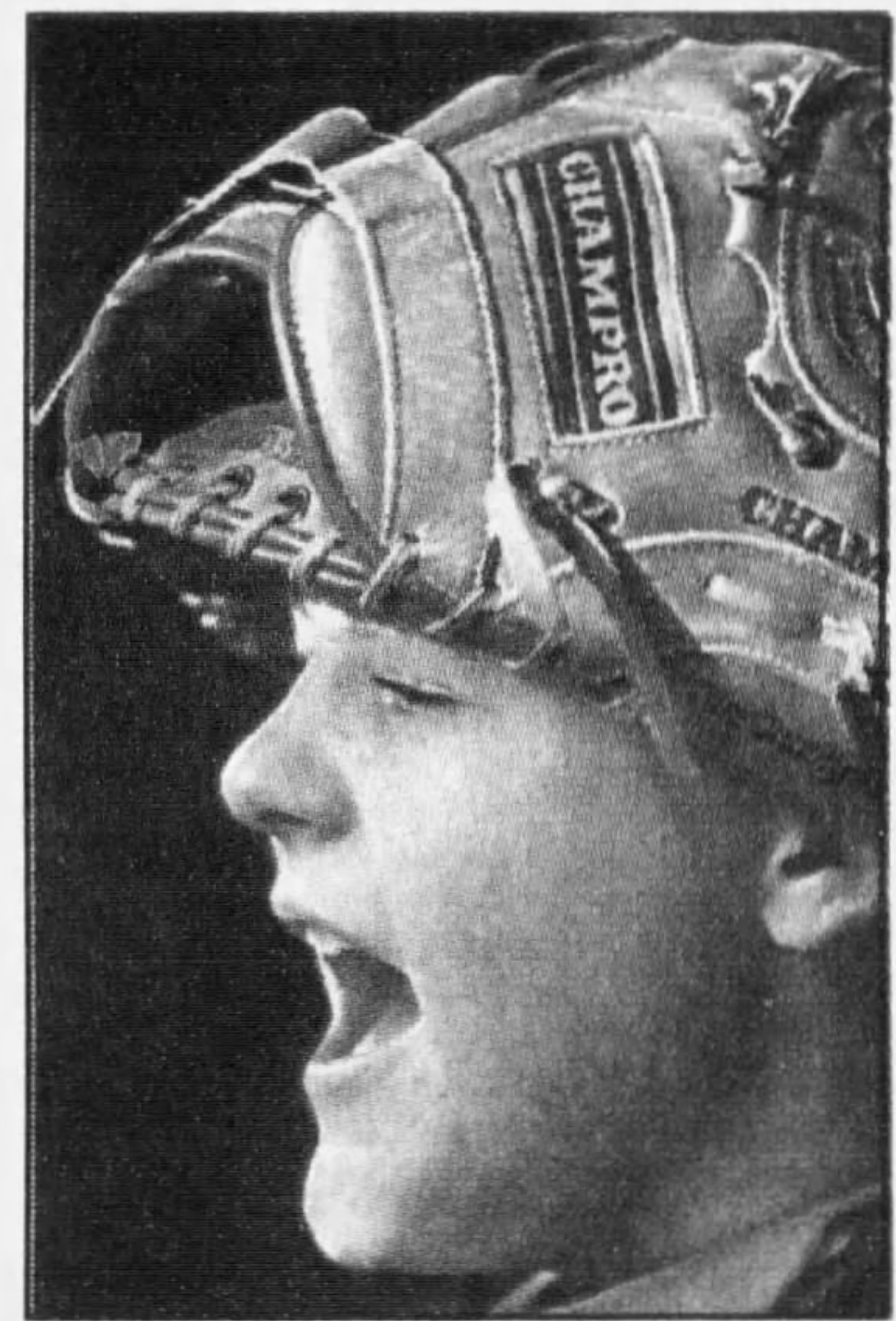
While the Mustang awoke to the sound of Zerman's triple, the Little Giants missed the bugle call.

"I can't understand it, we just came out flat," Ross coach Cheryl Schell said. "That's a shame because this is a good ballclub."

"Defensively, we went to pot. As soon as we settled down, we were fine. But that is not my team, typically. So we are a little disappointed."

Holly Pelfrey's single scored Zerman in the bottom of the first and gave Ross a 1-0 lead before the Little Giants' defense deserted them, and they fell to 20-3.

Strongsville tied the game with



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NIKKI PELFREY, catcher for the Fremont Ross Little Giants, puts on a rally cap to try and help start a late rally Friday at Brookside Park in Ashland. Ross fell short in the regional tournament, losing 5-3 to Strongsville.

a run in the second, an inning that could have been worse for Ross.

The Mustangs had two hits in the second but produced only a run despite three Ross errors. Left fielder Donna Steinberger saved a Mustang deluge with an over-the-shoulder catch of Lindsay Dickerson's long fly while falling down with the bases loaded.

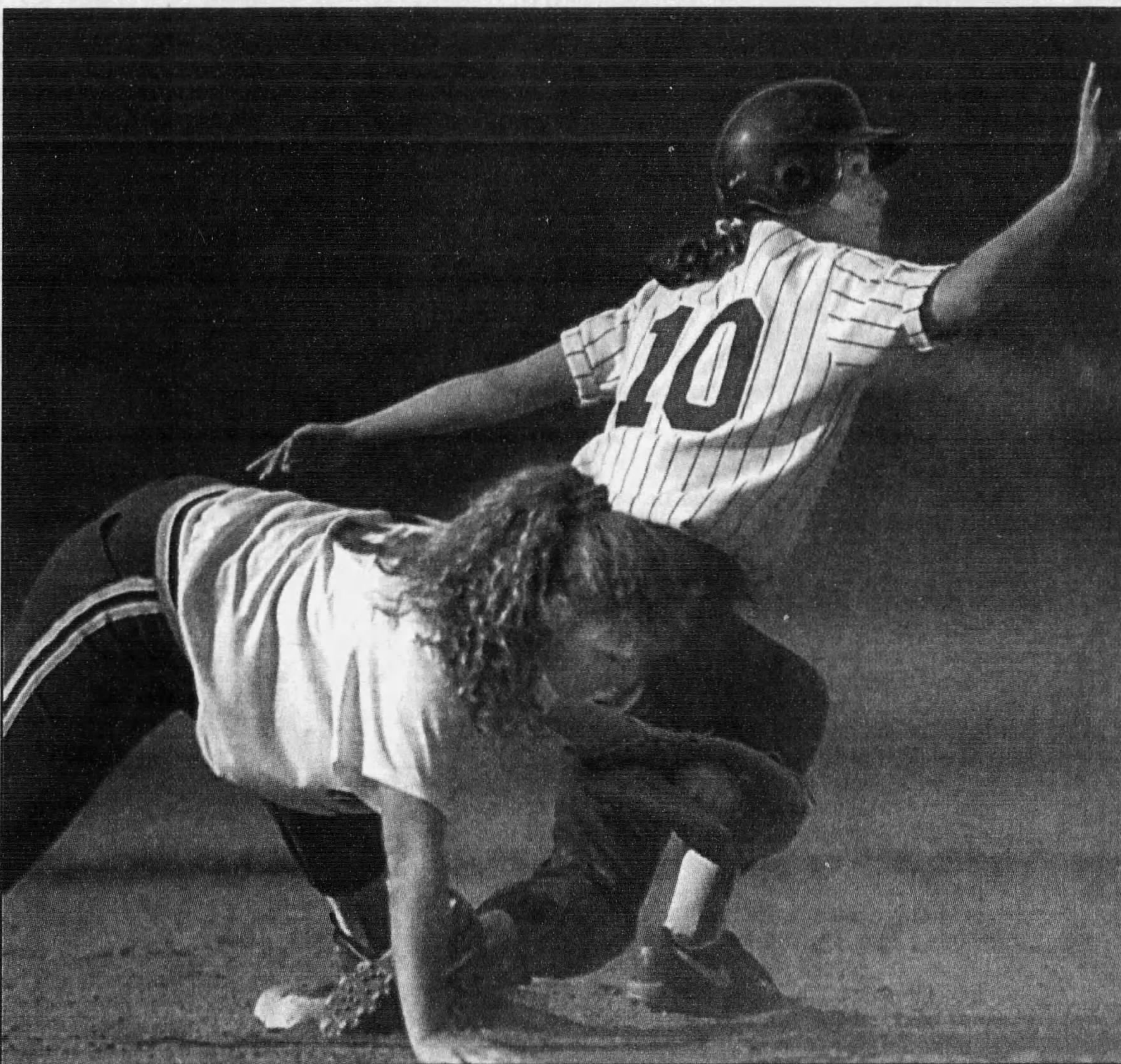
Another error, two hits and two walks put the Mustangs up 4-1 after three innings. All three runs came after two were out. Another error and two hits made it 5-1 in the fourth before Ross scored single runs in the fourth and fifth.

"We felt if we scored three runs we would win if the defense plays," Schell said.

Defensively, it was taps for the Little Giants.

Strongsville 5, Ross 3

Strongsville	013	100	0	—	5	7	1
Ross	100	110	0	—	3	9	5



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DAWN ZERMAN of Fremont Ross comes up safe after stealing second base during the fifth inning Friday. Strongsville defeated the Little Giants 5-3 in the Division

I Regional Softball Tournament on Friday over the Little Giants at Brookside Park in Ashland. Late with the tag is Strongsville shortstop Lindsay Dickerson.

How they scored

ROSS FIRST

Dawn Zerman tripled over left fielder Bridget Hough's head. Donna Steinberger was called out on strikes. Zerman scored on Holly Pelfrey's single to left-center. Pelfrey was forced at second on Jessica Rollins' grounder to shortstop Lindsay Dickerson, but Rollins was safe at first and went to second on Dickerson's wild relay throw. Nikki Pelfrey was called out on strikes. **1 run, 1 hit.**

STRONGSVILLE SECOND

Designated hitter Jenny Cillian was safe on first baseman Michelle Smith's error. Hough singled to right. Karen Kubis was out when Ross third baseman Casey Schepflin caught her bunt attempt, but Cillian and Hough advanced a base when Schepflin's throw to first went into right field. Mick Lisy was safe on a fielder's choice — her bunt was fielded by catcher Nikki Pelfrey, who threw to shortstop Zerman to catch Cillian in a rundown between third and home. Cillian was safe at third when the bag was left uncovered, loading the bases. Cillian scored when Nikki Pelfrey dropped Zerman's throw home following Jane Dickerson's ground-ball to Zerman. Becky Gray struck out, and Lindsay Dickerson was retired on left fielder Steinberger's over-the-shoulder catch while falling down. **1 run, 1 hit.**

STRONGSVILLE THIRD

Joclyn Madey popped out to second, and Jodie Meczka grounded out to short. Cillian had an infield single, beating Zerman's throw to first. Cillian stole second, and Hough walked. Cillian and Hough scored as Kubis' grounder went through Smith at first, with Kubis going to third. Lisy walked, and Kubis scored when Jane Dickerson singled off pitcher Rollins' glove. Gray flied out to center. **3 runs, 2 hits.**

STRONGSVILLE FOURTH

Lindsay Dickerson singled to right. Madey bunted and both runners were safe when Dickerson beat Nikki Pelfrey's throw to Zerman covering second. Jodie Meczka struck out, but Cillian's bunt single loaded the bases. Zerman caught Hough's popup in the hole, with Dickerson scoring. The runners advanced when Zerman overthrew Pelfrey at home. Kubis struck out. **1 run, 2 hits.**

ROSS FOURTH

Rollins grounded out to second, and Nikki Pelfrey struck out. Schepflin singled to right, and Jamie Hinkle singled to left. Smith singled to right scoring Schepflin. Hinkle was forced out at third on Emily Dowell's grounder to short. **1 run, 3 hits.**

ROSS FIFTH

Zerman was safe on an infield single, stole second and stole third. Steinberger popped out to first. Holly Pelfrey singled to left center, scoring Zerman. Rollins grounded out to the pitcher, and Nikki Pelfrey flied out to center. **1 run, 2 hits.**



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FREMONT ROSS first baseman Michelle Smith (right) gets a hug from shortstop Dawn Zerman following the Little Giants' loss in the Division I Regional Softball Tournament at Brookside Park in Ashland.