

Little Giants anticipate better defense

BY KEVIN SHIELDS
Sports writer

FREMONT — Interest in baseball has hit a new level at Fremont Ross.

"It's been awesome to see," said fourth-year coach Mark King, who is 36-36 in three seasons. "We're seeing bigger numbers and our talent level going up because of those numbers. Kids want to play baseball here."

"We've had some great baseball teams here at Fremont Ross and we know that can continue."

King hopes this year is a start. The Little Giants went 13-13 in 2010, finishing third in the Greater Buckeye Conference with 5-5 league record.

"We're extremely excited about the kids that are returning," King said. "I think this is the most talent we've had since 2006 when we won back-to-back conference titles."

For King, it starts with defense. Ross' offense has been there the last few years, but the defense has found different ways to cancel it out.

The Little Giants lost a six-run lead to Napoleon last year due to costly errors, as well as games against Toledo Central Catholic and St. John's Jesuit. A few mishaps also cost them another GBC slugfest against Sandusky.

"We had quite a few defensive lapses that turned into direct losses for us," King said.

With the return of junior catcher Jordan Garcia, sophomore shortstop Tyler Wolf, senior second



BRENDA SOULE/NEWS-MESSANGER CORRESPONDENT

Ross catcher Jordan Garcia will be counted on to anchor the Little Giants' defense up the middle this year.

baseman Jake Hiestand and junior centerfielder T.J. Harkness — all first and second team all-league and all-district players — King says there won't be any more excuses.

"The middle should be the key point of your defense," King said. "And we definitely have the experience and the talent there."

"We're way ahead of where we've been defensively right now. We're fielding like we did at the midpoint

of the season."

Garcia returns behind the plate, where he led the Little Giants in all offensive categories except stolen bases as a sophomore. Ross' captain-to-be had a .402 batting average with four homers and 22 RBI.

"We're going to hit him out the two-hole because of his ability to go to all fields," King said.

Harkness, who hit .357 with 13 RBI will most likely be the leadoff.

"T.J. is a catch-22 as a leadoff, because he runs so well, but he also has some pop in his bat," King said. "But he gets on base a lot, he's very disciplined at the plate and takes a lot of pitches."

Wolf, who hit close to .300 with six doubles and 13 RBI as a freshman will mostly likely be in the three hole with Trent Stout batting clean-up.

"Trent is a big, strong young man," King said. "And he showed that last year with his 22 RBI. He hit just around .300, but he's a kid where if you make a mistake, he can hit the baseball."

Senior Derek Aldrich will return this season after missing all of last season. He's expected to be competing at third base with Brian Mitten and hit well over .300 as a sophomore.

"I think he's going to be a tremendous addition to the team defensively," King said of Aldrich.

King's most consistent hitter of the preseason has been sophomore Spencer Conklin, who he plans to hit ninth.

Senior Jesse Blue will be in the mix at first base when he's not pitching. So, too, will be senior Justin Ward. Other reserves include sophomore Michael Egbert, senior Gabe Tayar, senior Eric Hogle, junior Clay Barron, senior Trevor Lull and junior Bryce McConnell.

"The unity is the strongest I've seen out of any of our teams, including the 2006 and 2007 teams," King said. "These guys have been in

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DEFENSE FROM 8

the weight room since last October training with coach (Mike) Lento and our coaching staff. They want to play. They're out here every night."

And with more of them, King hopes he'll be able to give his starters a few breaks.

"The big thing we have this year is depth," he said. "We have more pieces in place where on different nights we can give certain players a night off and not lose a whole lot."

"One thing we were worried about coming into the season,

though, was our pitching staff. Our main three starters graduated last season."

Blue, Harkness and Aldrich will most likely be the new rotation.

"Jesse is the only kid that had any considerable pitching time last year," King said of Blue, who was 2-0 with a 4.10 ERA in 2010.

Other pitchers include Egbert, Hiestand, Hogle and Ward (Ross' other captain for 2011).

"We actually have more kids on our pitching staff than we've ever had," King said. "We've always had four or five pitchers and one who

we always thought was lights out. This year we'll throw six or seven different kids."

"I don't think we're going to throw it by a lot of people, but if we can change speeds and hit our spots and have the other offense put the ball in play, I'm pretty confident we're going to play defense."

As usual, King expects Sandusky to be the GBC favorite, with Napoleon and Findlay also being big competitors.

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Fremont Ross holds on in non-league baseball

News-Messenger reports

T.J. Harkness tallied two hits, two runs and an RBI, then struck out the only batter he faced on the mound to record a save in a 6-5 Fremont Ross win over Toledo Central Catholic Thursday in non-league play.

The Little Giants (1-0) tallied a single run in the first, two in the third, one in the fifth and two in the sixth. They then held off the Fighting Irish (0-1) who rallied

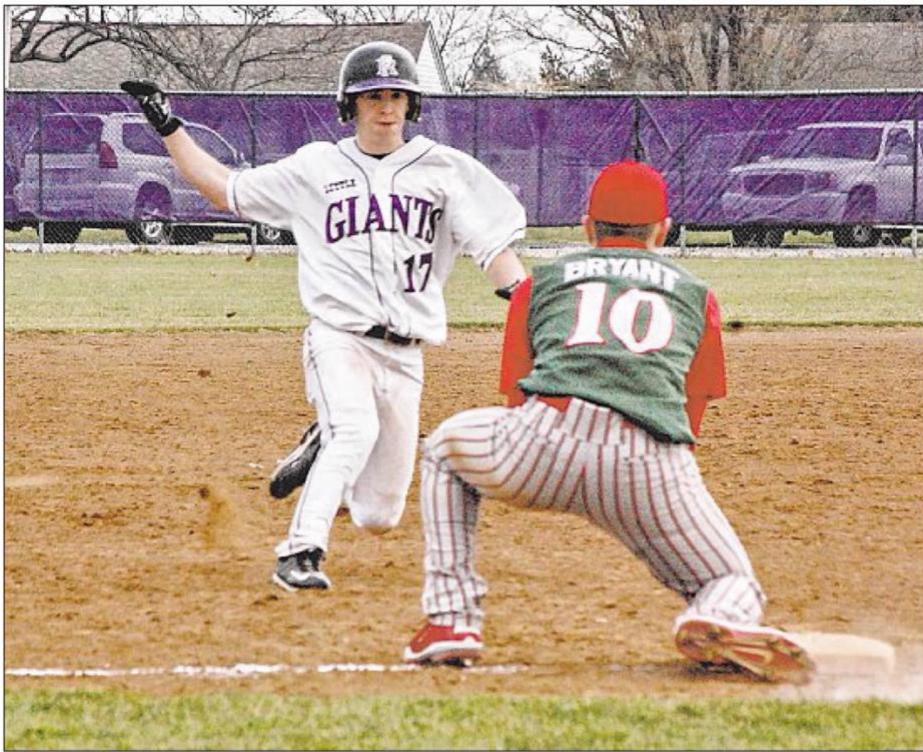
for three runs in the seventh after getting single runs in the fourth and fifth.

Jordan Garcia went 2-for-3, scored a run and brought in a run for Ross. Trent Stout also had multiple hits and drove in two runs.

Jesse Blue earned the victory on the hill for the Little Giants going $4\frac{1}{3}$ innings, surrendering two runs on six hits. He struck out two and walked one.

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HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL ■ DOUBLEHEADER: OAK HARBOR AT FREMONT ROSS



Fremont Ross baserunner T.J. Harkness slides into third base as Phil Bryant of Oak Harbor awaits a throw during Saturday's doubleheader at Fremont Ross. Harkness was the winning pitcher in the second game, a 14-13 Little Giants win that salvaged a split. Oak Harbor scored 11 times in the top of the first and won the first game 18-2.

Little Giants get a split

After resounding loss in first game, Ross rallies to win second

BY SEAN SHAPIRO
News-Messenger correspondent

FREMONT — Fremont Ross rallied from an early deficit and was able to salvage a split in its doubleheader Saturday with Oak Harbor.

The Little Giants won the day's second game 14-13, after dropping the first game 18-2.

The first game was never in question, as the Rockets (3-1) scored 11 runs in the first inning and kept up the offensive pressure.

It wasn't an 11-run outburst from the Rockets like the first game, Fremont Ross (2-1) once again found itself down early in the second game. Oak Harbor led 7-0 after the top of the second inning.

However, the Little Giants started to recover. Ross outscored the Rockets 14-6 over the final four innings.

"This team's got a heart," Ross coach Mark King said. "Out of the last four years this team has had the most heart. I challenged them in between games. We had just got it handed to us and now we had a choice — respond or fold up and just let it go."

Having cut the deficit to

"I challenged them in between games. We had just got it handed to us and now we had a choice — respond or fold up and just let it go."

MARK KING
Fremont Ross coach

three runs in the second inning, the Little Giants would see the Rockets push the differential 10-5 in the top of the fourth inning.

Trent Stout got hit by a pitch to start a rally in the bottom of the fourth and was the first of four Ross runners to score in the inning. That gave the Little Giants momentum they didn't surrender.

After the Little Giants held Oak Harbor scoreless in the fifth, Jake Heistand came up big with an RBI single that scored Derek Aldrich with the game-tying run in the bottom of the inning.

One inning later, the Little Giants picked up their first lead of the doubleheader. Winning pitcher T. J. Harkness got it started with a double to left. He scored on a two-run double

from Stout. A pair of sacrifice flies pushed Fremont Ross' lead to 14-10 entering the seventh, and proved to be just enough as Oak Harbor nearly rallied for the tie.

With three runs already across and having chased Harkness from the game for reliever Brian Mitten, the Rockets were a step away from tying the game. Josh Warnke nearly beat out a throw to first base on what could have been the game-tying single. Instead, Warnke was called out, despite a brief protest from the Rockets and the Little Giants salvaged the split in the doubleheader.

But the opening game of the day was a much different story. Oak Harbor sent 17 hitters to the plate in the top of the first

to set the tone. That made it an easy outing for Alex Bores, who picked up the win on the mound.

"I'm extremely happy to come out on the road and get 11 runs from the get-go," said Oak Harbor coach Rob Schimmoeller. "(Alex) had a very nice cushion, all he had to do was lean back and just throw strikes. He didn't have to worry about the other team possibly putting the ball in play."

Fielding didn't do the Little Giants any favors either. Poor fielding left the door open for Oak Harbor to keep piling on the runs.

The Little Giants scored just two runs — on an RBI single from Michael Egbert in the fourth and Jordan Garcia's sixth inning homer — but they did make plenty of contact. They just couldn't make contact at the right time, stranding six runners on base.

"In the first game, offense wasn't our problem. Defense was our problem," King said. "I thought we had some quality at bats the first game, give them credit, they made some nice defensive plays when we hit the ball hard."

HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS ROUNDUP

Fremont Ross rallies in GBC baseball

News-Messenger reports

Fremont Ross scored seven runs in the third through sixth innings, coming back from a 4-1 deficit, and knocked off Marion Harding, 8-7, in its Greater Buckeye Conference opener.

The Little Giants (3-1, 1-0) tied the game 5-5 with a three-run fourth, before taking the lead with a single run in the fifth and two in the sixth.

Tyler Wolf's 3-for-4 effort led four Ross hitters with multiple hits. Wolf added a run and an RBI. Trent Stout finished 2-for-3 with a run scored and an RBI, Jordan Garcia was 2-for-3 with two runs scored and two RBI. Justin Ward went 2-for-4 with an RBI.

Garcia's two-run homer was part of the Little Giants' fourth inning rally.

Brian Mitten picked up the win in relief. He tossed three innings, surrendering a run on three hits

with four strikeouts and a walk.

Baseball

Bellevue 9, Upper Sandusky 0

Mike Fry (2-0) allowed three hits and struck out nine in six innings, allowing Bellevue to cling to a one-run lead through the first four innings, before tallying eight runs in the final two to win its Northern Ohio League opener.

"Mike had another great outing," Redmen coach Andy Dennings said. "He really battled today as he got behind some hitters, but made pitches to get back in at-bats and eventually win the at-bats. It has really been a nice start to the season on the bump."

Fry walked just two hitters before giving way to Jeff Roth, who pitched a scoreless seventh.

Roth went 2-for-3 at the plate with a run and an RBI. Also collecting two hits were Adam Manner and Alex Manner.

Shane Iannello had two dou-

bles and three RBI.

"I thought we let their pitcher get into a groove during the middle innings," Dennings said. "We eventually settled in and got some quality at bats. It was nice to see those crooked numbers as we have been looking for a spark offensively."

Gibsonburg 12, Van Buren 5

Nathan Palmerton belted three hits and added an RBI as Gibsonburg used an eight-run first inning to put away Van Buren in non-league play.

Leroy Neeb was 2-for-3 with an RBI for the Golden Bears (5-0). Brett Diekman hit a triple.

Dylan Dorfmeyer was the winning pitcher on the mound.

St. Mary CC 10, Old Fort 0

Garet Kimmel, Cole Davidson, Nick Yeakle and Hunter Perry had hits for Old Fort in a loss to Sandusky St. Mary Central Catholic.

Port Clinton 5, St. Joseph CC 0

Port Clinton sent nine batters to the plate in the third inning and scored five runs. Robert Fravel hurled a complete game two-hit shutout as St. Joseph Central Catholic dropped its fifth straight to start the spring.

Zack Yeckley tossed six innings for the Crimson Streaks, allowing nine hits, striking out eight and walking two.

Softball

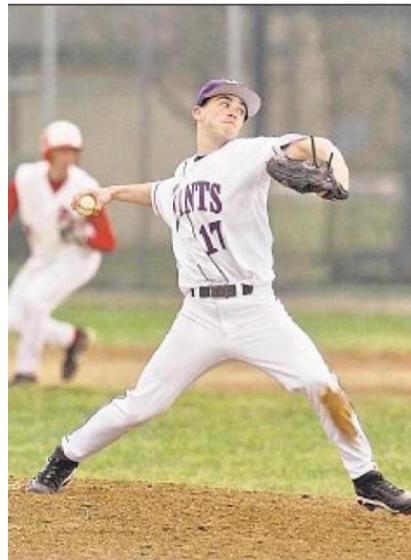
Bellevue 6, Upper Sandusky 0

Erika Jordan allowed just four hits in the circle and recorded two of her own at the plate as Bellevue won its Northern Ohio League opener against Upper Sandusky.

The Rams were only able to reach base seven times as Jordan struck out five and walked just two in seven innings of work.

Marissa Kath led the Lady Rec

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Fremont Ross pitcher TJ Harkness winds up in the fifth inning as the Port Clinton base runner leads off during Wednesday's game. JONATHON BIRD/NEWS-MESSENGER

HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS ROUNDUP

Little Giants squash Redskins 15-3

News-Messenger reports

PORCLINTON — Fremont Ross beat Port Clinton 15-3 in five innings Wednesday afternoon.

Notching the win for Ross was TJ Harkness, who struck out 5 and walked only one. Harkness also went 3-for-4 from the plate, driving in four runs.

Jake Hiestand hit a grand slam. Also going yard for the Little Giants were Trent Stout, who had 3 RBI, and Harkness.

SJCC 34, Bettsville 3

BETTSVILLE — Cory Miller got his first win as a coach as St. Joseph Central Catholic trounced Bettsville 34-3 in five innings in a Midland Athletic League game Wednesday.

Ben Zyski took the win, and went 3-for-4, scoring four runs and knocking in

four more. Aaron Swint, Tom Spader and Casey Effinger all doubled for the Crimson

Streaks (1-5, 1-0 MAL). Swint went 3-for-3 with two runs, two RBI and a stolen base.

Seneca East 18, Old Fort 3

OLD FORT — Matthew Arbogast took the loss as the Stockaders dropped a Midland Athletic League game 18-3 to Seneca East on Wednesday.

Dalton Perry doubled for Old Fort (0-5, 0-1 MAL), as part of a 3-for-3 day.

Billy Diehm was the winning pitcher, and went 2-for-4 at the plate.

Bellevue 7, Oak Harbor 6

OAK HARBOR — A Rockets rally came up just

short as Oak Harbor lost 7-6 in a non-league game against Bellevue on Wednesday.

Brian Mallernee took the loss for the Rockets (5-2). Jordan McNeely got the win for the Redmen (6-1), and Adam Manner picked up the save.

Mark Konieczny had two doubles for the Rockets.

Northwood 5, Gibsonburg 0

NORTHWOOD — Gibsonburg lost its first game of the season Wednesday, a 5-0 non-league shutout on the road at Northwood.

Nick Sneider took the loss for the Bears (5-1).

Softball

SJCC 15, Bettsville 0

BETTSVILLE — Kylie Wojdyla threw a five-inning perfect game as SJCC beat Bettsville 15-0 in a Midland Athletic League matchup

Wednesday. Cassidy Frank homered for the Crimson Streaks (4-3, 1-0), and Ann Beaschler,

Jensen LeJeune and Katie Stroup hit triples. Stroup also had a double.

Bellevue 17, Oak Harbor 6

OAK HARBOR — Logan Bahnsen homered, Theresa Stokes tripled and Dayna Setzler doubled in a Rockets' 17-6 non-league loss to Bellevue in five innings.

Sam Durivage took the loss for the Rockets (0-3). Laura Doerner was the winning pitcher for the Lady Red.

Lakota 7, Carey 3

KANSAS — Amy Gosche

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Baseball

**Fremont Ross 14,
Toledo Waite 0**

TJ Harkness had three hits and Trent Stout had two as Fremont Ross crushed Toledo Waite

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Roundup

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N

Thursday in a non-league game.

The Little Giants (5-1) scored two runs in the first, a single run in the second, five in the fourth and six in the fifth to win in five innings.

Eric Hogle earned the victory on the hill for Ross, tossing all five innings, allowing six hits, striking out three and walking none.

PREP ROUNDUP

Fremont Ross loses lead late in loss to Sandusky

News-Messenger reports

Fremont Ross's baseball team nearly pulled off a big Greater Buckeye Conference win at arch-rival Sandusky Tuesday.

But with the Little Giants holding on to a slim one-run lead in the bottom of the seventh inning, that all changed in one swing of the bat by the Blue Streaks' Xavier Turner, whose walk-off three-run homer gave Sandusky a come-from-behind 5-3 win.

Suffering the loss for Ross (5-2, 1-1) was Jesse Blue who went six innings. He gave up five runs (four earned) on seven hits, striking out three and walking two.

All of the Little Giants offense came from Derek Aldrich's three-run home run in the top half of the third inning. Adding two hits and a run was Tyler Wolf.

Turner went 2-for-3 to lead Sandusky.

ria at bay in the circle, tossing a two-hit shutout for Bellevue which earned a Tuesday Northern Ohio League win.

Jordan, who was 3-for-4 at the plate, struck out eight and didn't walk a single batter.

Sydney Vickery doubled twice for the Lady Red (5-2, 2-0), while also collecting three hits. Hannah Lilly, Meredith George and Lindsey Yantz each singled twice.

Clyde 10, Tiffin Columbian 2

Kaylea Griffin had three hits and Brooke Billings struck out five and walked one in the circle for Clyde, which downed Tiffin Columbian in Tuesday non-league action.

Adding a triple for the Fliers (10-1) was Nicole George. Chelsea Zerman and Alivia Danhoff each doubled.

Tennis

Fremont Ross 89½

Oak Harbor 54, Perkins 31½

Fremont Ross won all four relays and got two individual wins from Paige Weichman 1,600 (5:45.02) and 3,200 (12:28) en route to winning a tri-meet with Oak Harbor and Sandusky Perkins.

Alexis Chapman won the shot put (28 feet, 5½ inches) for the Little Giants, Ellen Silva the pole vault (10 feet, 6 inches), Maria Mathews the 100 (12.9) and 200 (26.71).

Ross also earned a first in the 100 hurdles and high jump.

Allie Dombrowsky won the 300 hurdles (50.97) for the Rockets who also got a win from Morgan Turnow in the discus (125 feet).

Port Clinton 94½

Lakota 42½

Kylie Podach won the 100 hurdles (18.1) and pole vault (7 feet,

Fremont Ross 9, Clyde 2

Trent Stout drove in one run and scored another as Ross won a non-conference matchup.

Eric Hogle struck out four and walked five in seven innings to notch the win on the mound. Jesse Blue and Stout each had two hits for the Little Giants (6-2).

Ross scored four runs in the third inning and four more in the fourth.

Zach Prentice, Royce Laudeau and Jose Leal each had two hits for the Fliers.

Bad bounce costs Little Giants in loss to Napoleon

By Kevin Shields
Sports writer

FREMONT — If Fremont Ross is in the hunt for the Greater Buckeye Conference baseball title at the end of the season, two plays from this past week may end up being the deciding factor in it not laying its hands on the trophy.

The first was a walk-off homer the Little Giants surrendered to Sandusky's Xavier Turner on Tuesday in a 5-3 loss. The second could be a bad short hop that cost Fremont on Friday in a 2-1 GBC loss to Napoleon in nine innings.

With two outs and the game tied at a run in top of the ninth, Ross pitcher Brian Mitten threw a pitch that fooled Napoleon's Robert Gilson. Unfortunately for Mitten and the Little Giants, Gilson missed the middle of the ball and instead topped it, making it bounce towards third baseman Derek Aldrich in a tough way to make a play.

"Brian made a great pitch

NAPOLEON	2
FREMONT ROSS	1

GBC baseball

thinking he could get the out," Little Giants coach Mark King said. "But the guy topped it and it took that long hop and Derek (Aldrich) got caught between a hop and he came up a little short of making the play."

The miscue allowed Wildcat pitcher Austin Monnin to score the game-winning run from third.

Monnin earned the win on the hill for Napoleon (5-2, 3-0). He allowed two hits, struck out nine and didn't give up a walk in a 105 pitch complete game.

"Austin Monnin was fantastic for us on the mound," Wildcats coach Justin Firk said. "Fremont can swing the bats, so we knew coming in it was going to be a tough challenge for us, especially with the way they played against

Sandusky earlier in the week."

Monnin's breaking pitches, particularly his curveball, gave Ross fits all evening. Until a single up the middle by Aldrich in the ninth, Monnin hadn't surrendered a hit in seven straight innings.

"That was our big downfall," King said. "I thought we did a real nice job on his fastball. But he got his breaking pitches low and kept it in spots where we couldn't do anything with it."

Monnin and Mitten both were aided by the wind blowing in hard towards home plate.

"This isn't good baseball weather," King said. "We knew it was going to come down to a hop or a bad throw or something. The wind was blowing directly into the hitter's faces. You can't drive the ball in that type of weather."

Ross caught a break in the first inning when Trent Stout hit a ball to third that was fielded by third baseman Derek Aldrich in a tough way to make a play.

"Trent made a great pitch

Jordan Garcia to score from first. Garcia singled to right for the Little Giants' lone other hit.

Ross wouldn't get another baserunner until the sixth inning.

"We knew it was going to be a low-scoring affair," Firk said. "And we made some mistakes and fortunately (Ross) didn't capitalize. And they made some mistakes and fortunately we did capitalize."

It was the second straight win in extra innings for the Wildcats at Ross's Alumni Fields.

"This is two years in a row we were able to sneak one out over here," Firk said. "Last year we won here in eight innings. So there must be something good for Napoleon over in Fremont."

Mitten took the loss for the Little Giants, tossing nine innings. He allowed an earned run on five hits, tallying two strikeouts and three walks.

"He had a good fastball and was just hitting his spots," King said.

Spencer Conklin reached second on an error to start the sixth

inning for Ross. He got to third with one out, but couldn't score.

The Little Giants had another runner in scoring position in the eighth with one out, but he was stranded as well.

"We had opportunities in the sixth, eighth and ninth to walk off," King said. "But we got to make a little better effort at getting a bunt down."

Friday's loss is the second straight league loss to a foe King considers to be a top contender in the conference.

"Unfortunately for us we had to open the league with Sandusky and Napoleon," King said. "And even though we didn't come out with wins, we very easily could have."

"The kids gave great effort all game long. It was a great high school baseball game. I'll take these kids any day, we got talent levels with this group that we haven't had in a while."

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Baseball

Ross 5, Marion Harding 2

TJ Harkness scored twice and Jesse Blue earned the victory on the mound as Ross won in the GBC.

Blue struck out eight and walked one in seven innings. Tyler Wolf scored once and drove in a run for the Little Giants (7-3, 2-2).

HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL » FREMONT ROSS 10, TIFFIN COLUMBIAN 7



Fremont Ross hitter Jesse Blue bunts during Thursday's game with Tiffin Columbian at Fifth Third Field in Toledo. The Little Giants and Tornadoes put on an offensive display in a 10-7 Fremont win. JONATHON BIRD/NEWS-MESSANGER

Ross wins on offense

Little Giants hammer out 10 runs, top Tiffin Columbian

By Mason Lowry

News-Messenger correspondent

TOLEDO — Thursday was not one of Fifth Third Field's designated Fireworks Nights.

The offenses for Fremont Ross and Tiffin Columbian saw to it that the crowd saw an impressive display, anyway. The two teams combined for 24 hits in the Little Giants' 10-7 victory.

"We keep preaching to our guys to stay aggressive early in counts," Ross assistant coach Jared King said. "And that's exactly what we did. We scored in every inning, and we can hold our heads high about that. It doesn't happen very often."

Tornadoes pitcher Nick Loura struck out TJ Harkness to open the game, but struggled after that as Jordan Garcia singled to center and advanced to second on a wild pitch.

Tyler Wolf then smacked a double to the gap, but Garcia was held at third. Trent Stout drove in both of them with a single down the right field line.

Loura retired Spencer Conklin to start the second inning, but the wheels fell off after that. Jake Hiestand and Justin Ward hit consecutive singles, and two batter later, Garcia slapped an RBI single to right to chase Loura.

Brandon Fowler replaced Loura and forced Wolf to pop out

to end the threat. Conklin hit a two-run double in the third to give the Little Giants a 5-0 lead.

But the Tornadoes made a game of it in an odd third inning. Fremont Ross starter Brian Mitten, who cruised through the first two innings, walked Logan Tracy with two outs.

Ryan Tittle tripled to right center, followed by RBI hits from Tyler Fuhrer and Shawn Cole. Jordan Price then flared a ball down the right field line that was misplayed by three Fremont Ross fielders, allowing another run to score before Carter Mullins drove in the tying run on a ball that took a funny hop at short and bounded into the outfield.

Fremont Ross took the lead back in its half of the fourth. Wolf drove in a run on a single that caromed off the pitcher's mound and into center.

Three batters later, Jesse Blue hit a high fly ball that the left fielder lost in the lights, allowing another run to score. Ross added two more to its tally in the fifth on singles from Garcia and Ward.

Columbian scored twice on an error to make it a two-run game in the sixth, but TJ Harkness answered back with a single down the right field line that plated Conklin. Mitten shut the door on the Tornadoes in the seventh to seal the win.

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ROSS

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Mitten walked two and gave up nine hits in seven innings for the win on the mound.

“The thing about Brian is that he’s always in the strike zone,” said King, whose father and Ross head coach Mark King missed the game because he was being honored at the Ross Top 25 Banquet. “He does a nice job of letting the defense behind him do their job. He left the ball up in the zone a bit in the third and got punished for it, but he bounced back very well.”

Eight Little Giants recorded hits Thursday, including Garcia, who went 3-for-5 with a double and drove in two runs.

Fowler, one of four pitchers used by Columbian in the game, took the loss.

“Hopefully, (the win) gives us a boatload of confidence,” King said. “We’ve got a tough league game against Findlay coming up, and we need our confidence to carry over.”

PREP SPORTS ROUNDUP

GBC baseball: Ross takes down Findlay

News-Messenger reports

FINDLAY — Jordan Garcia hit his fifth home run of the season and Jesse Blue struck out seven in a complete-game win as the Fremont Ross baseball team beat Findlay 5-3 in a Greater Buckeye Conference win Friday.

Blue also went 2-for-4 at the plate, as did TJ Harkness and Garcia. Tyler Wolf went 2-for-3 with 2 RBIs for Ross (9-5, 3-2 GBC).



Garcia

BASEBALL BOX SCORES

FREMONT ROSS 4, BELLEVUE 1 (GAME 1)

Ross	1100020—	4	8	1
Bellevue	0000010—	1	4	0

WP: TJ Harkness.

LP: Alex Manner (2 ER, 3 SO, 3 BB).

Doubles: Bellevue 2 (Manner, Dilan Buckner).

Records: Ross 10-5; Bellevue 11-4.

FREMONT ROSS 5, BELLEVUE 3 (GAME 2)

Ross	0040001—	5	6	0
Bellevue	0001200—	3	6	0

WP: Derek Aldrich.

LP: Jeff Roth (4 ER, 2 SO, 0 BB).

Doubles: Bellevue 1 (Roth).

Two or more hits: Bellevue – Ryan Geary 2-4, RBI, R; Roth 3-4, 2 RBI.

Records: Ross 11-5; Bellevue 11-5.

Next: Bellevue at Tiffin Columbian, today; Ross at Napoleon, Tuesday.

Baseball

Fremont Ross 3, Sandusky 3

Fremont Ross gave undefeated Sandusky everything it could handle and more in the team's Monday Greater Buckeye Conference re-match at Alumni Fields.

The Little Giants scored three runs in the first four innings to take an early 3-1 lead on the Blue Streaks (16-0), before Sandusky answered with two runs in the top-half of the fifth.

Both teams played to a scoreless stalemate over the next five innings as the game was postponed due to darkness.

Ross received a stellar pitching performance from Jesse Blue, who went nine innings, allowing three runs on eight hits, but had seven strikeouts to just five walks.

Jordan Garcia, Tyler Wolf, Jake Hiestand and Justin Ward each had two hits for the Little Giants. Garcia doubled and had an RBI, as did Ward. Wolf was 2 for 5 with an RBI.

LIMA SENIOR 4
FREMONT ROSS 0

GBC Baseball

Bats don't click for Little Giants

By Kevin Shields
Sports writer

FREMONT — T.J. Harkness couldn't have pitched much better.

Through six innings Thursday, the Fremont Ross junior was nearly untouchable, allowing Lima Senior no hits, while he struck out nine and walked three.

Unfortunately for Harkness, there are seven innings in a high school baseball game, and his offense wasn't giving him much help.

The Spartans finally figured Harkness out. They tallied their first hit in the seventh inning and found a way to score four runs in the top of the eighth, as Ross fell 4-0 in the extra-inning Greater Buckeye Conference contest.

"You can't throw a one-hitter through seven innings and squander it away," Little Giants coach Mark King said. "It was a very strong pitching performance by T.J., and it's disheartening that we couldn't get it done at the plate."

"There's not too many times in high school baseball where you can throw a one-hitter in seven innings and lose the baseball game. I feel bad for him."

All four runs against Harkness went unearned as the Ross (11-6-1, 3-3) defense made three errors in the field behind him.

Lima Senior (5-12, 2-7) starting pitcher Austin Beggin led off the eighth with a single to right field. Just behind him, relief pitcher, Zach Rumbaugh, reached on a fielder's choice that allowed Beggin to score from second on a Ross fielding error at third base.

Rumbaugh scored the Spartans' second run on another Little Giants' fielding error a batter later. Two more runs came home on a dropped fly ball in center field.

Meanwhile, in the bottom half of the inning, Rumbaugh picked up where Beggin left off.

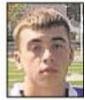
Ross' Jesse Blue hit a two-out double in the eighth, however, it was too little too late. Rumbaugh picked up the win in relief for the Spartans tossing 1½ scoreless innings, striking out two and walking one.

Beggin, making his first start, scattered five hits in 6½ innings, striking out two and walking one on 78 total pitches.

"Boy, maybe I should've started him more," Spartans coach Jimmy Morris said of Beggin. "He's a senior that we've been using in relief all year. We've been trying to save up our No. 1 and No. 2 guys for the tournament by pitching them out of the bullpen, but maybe we should've started him a little bit more."

Harkness ended up throwing 133 pitches for Ross, collecting 11 strikeouts, four walks and one hit batter as he allowed just two hits.

See ROSS, page B4



Ross

Continued from Page B1

“(Harkness) threw a great game,” Morris said. “Unfortunately, we haven’t hit the ball that well this year. But we just kept battling.”

Ross recorded five hits and got six baserunners on base in the first six innings. Only twice, though, would a runner get in scoring position.

“Austin threw a great game,” Morris said. “What he was able to do was keep the ball at the knees. He worked Fremont’s knees, and he was throwing his changeup really well. He didn’t really find his curveball until about the fourth inning, and then he could start mixing that in a bit.”

“But we didn’t really strikeout too many guys, so our defense was making plays behind him.”

Beggin said throwing strikes and making the Little Giants put the ball in play



Wolf

was part of his strategy.

“It all comes down to having confidence in the people behind you,” Beggin said. “On every ball that’s hit, I have complete confidence that everyone of my guys will have my back.”

Tyler Wolf had three hits for Ross in his first three at bats, finishing the game 3 for 4.

The Little Giants made solid contact against Beggin in the first couple innings, pulling a lot of balls foul down the left field line.

“(Ross) was pulling my fastball quite a bit,” Beggin said. “I knew my changeup would get them out in front and I think that led to a lot of groundballs.”

Blue was the only other multiple-hitter for the Little Giants, going 2 for 4.

“We need to change our approach at the plate right now,” King said. “That’s 14 straight scoreless innings for us now. Our mindsets need to change.”

Email Kevin Shields at kshields@gannett.com.

Napoleon tops Ross to win GBC title share

By Sean Shapiro
News-Messenger correspondent

NAPOLEON — It rained hard on the field and Napoleon now reigns with at least a share of the final Greater Buckeye Conference baseball championship with a 5-3 win over Fremont Ross on Tuesday.

In a game that was originally rescheduled because of inclement weather, wind and rain battered both teams Tuesday night, leaving players soaked and sometimes slipping in deep, wet grass.

The Wildcats overcame the elements, and the Little Giants, to win at least a share of the GBC Championship — their first league

championship since 1985.

Trailing by a run entering the sixth, Napoleon (17-5) rallied to the victory, aided by three costly mistakes by the Little Giants (11-9).

“Bottom line is we didn’t finish in the end,” Ross coach Mark King said. “I know it’s raining and not conducive to good baseball. But we’ve got to come through and stop them or get the runs up.”

For six innings, Ross fielded the ball well despite the rain, backing up pitcher Jesse Blue, who pitched well even when he started to slip on the rain-drenched mound. But, in the bottom of the sixth inning the strong defense behind Blue fell apart as his 2-1 lead

NAPOLEON 5
FREMONT ROSS 3
GBC baseball

quickly was washed away.

With a runner on third — courtesy of a passed ball — Napoleon’s Tyler Miller crushed a breaking ball to center field over the head of Ross center fielder TJ Harkness, who was playing shallow. The result was a triple and the tying RBI for Miller, and it also swung the momentum to the Wildcats.

Ross Huber brought Miller home one batter later, reaching on

a throwing error by Ross shortstop Tyler Wolf. Two batters later — after a groundout by Robert Gilson that would have ended the inning if not for Wolf’s error — Ross second baseman Jake Hiestand overthrew first and the Wildcats scored another run.

Napoleon added the fourth run of the inning on another Ross miscue, as a pick-off throw to second base by Blue was low. In the time it took Hiestand to recover the ball Dylan Glass stole home from third base.

Ross had taken the lead in the fifth when they were able to capitalize on a pair of walks, setting the stage for Trent Stout and Clay

Barron, who each had an RBI.

Both starting pitchers went the distance, as Miller limited Ross to five hits and struck out six, while Blue was the hard-luck loser after allowing the Wildcats to rap out four hits and only walking a pair of batters.

“He pitched a fantastic game,” King said. “Jesse Blue is our senior guy, we give him the ball every big game. His record is now 3-3, but that isn’t indicative of his skills, he’s got a 2.68 ERA and keeps us in every game.”

Ross added a run in the seventh, before Miller struck out Spencer Conklin to end the game with a runner in scoring position.

SANDUSKY	6
FREMONT ROSS	3

Final -
Great Buckeye Conference

“It’s a league rival. It wasn’t tough for the kids to get up (for extra innings),” Oak Harbor coach Rob Schimmoeller said. “They’ve beat us twice this year. It’s a tournament game. They came to play.”

The Rockets will face Mansfield Madison on Friday at 5 p.m. in a Division II district semifinal at Galion.

Oak Harbor improved to 11-8.

Sandusky 6, Ross 3

Trey Keegan crushed T.J. Harkness’ first pitch in the eleventh inning to right field, easily landing at second with a double. Brady Smith followed Keegan’s double by reaching on an error, before Delon Roldan-Johnson and Dominic Aaron hit RBI-singles.

“We had our three, four and

five hitters up, so they knew what they needed to do,” Blue Streaks coach Matt Martin said. “Trey’s double was big for us. Sometimes after 16 days you need a little luck to go your way right away.”

In the bottom half of the eleventh inning, Smith struck out a pair of Little Giants — his 15th and 16th victims of the game — to pick up the win after entering in the fourth inning May 2.

While Wednesday’s effort wasn’t what the Little Giants were looking for, Ross (11-9) coach Mark King was proud how his team battled the first 10 innings.

“This was the culmination of one of the best high school baseball games I’ve ever been apart of,” King said. “Definitely top-5, we played well, but that first extra base hit was too much and opened it up for them.”

For 20-2 Sandusky, the win clinched a share of the Greater Buckeye Conference title. They finished tied with Napoleon at 8-2 in conference play.

It’s the Blue Streaks third straight conference crown.

BASEBALL

Ross 1, Findlay 0

The Ross baseball team ended the season with a 1-0 Greater Buckeye Conference win over Findlay on Friday.

Trent Stout singled home Brian Mitten in the third inning for the only run of the game.

Jesse Blue pitched a complete-game shutout, scattering six hits.

"This is the first time he gave up more than five hits in his last five games," said Ross coach Mark King.

The Little Giants finish the season 12-10 (4-6 GBC).

"It's nice to come out and see a strong defensive effort," King said.

Local stars lead all-lea

News-Messenger reports

Fremont Ross sophomore McKenzie Gallagher was named pitcher of the year in the Greater Buckeye Conference.

Gallagher shared the honor with Sandusky pitcher Ashley Gilbert. Casey Clark and Christy Meggitt, teammates for all four years of their high school careers, were named to the first team for the Little Giants.

Junior McKenzie Schneider and freshman Kelsy Ivy were named to the second team, and Meghan Michael, Sara Gowitzka, Ally Hotz and Kaylee Armor were given honorable mention.

Fremont Ross's Tyler Wolf, Jesse Blue, TJ Harkness and Jordan Garcia were named to the all-GBC baseball first team. Trent

Stout and Derek Aldrich were named to the second team, and Jake Hiestand, Spencer Conklin and Brian Mitten were given honorable mention.

Suburban Lakes League

Gibsonburg catcher Brett Diekman was named to the all-Suburban Lakes League first team in baseball.

Diekman, a senior, was recognized in the league's last year of existence. Most of the SLL teams will be part of the new Northern Buckeye Conference in the fall.

Gibsonburg's Nick Sneider and Woodmore catcher Jake Zollinger were named to the second team.

Gibsonburg's Gage Beaber, Andrew Cantrell and Vincent