

Ross draws top sectional ranking

By MICHAEL BOSI
Staff writer

The Fremont Ross softball team drew the top seed in its Division I sectional tournament and opted out of a first-round bye, which accommodates the Little Giants' schedule next week.

Ross (10-3) will take on Sandusky next Wednesday at Tiffin

HIGH SCHOOLS

Columbian. The Little Giants opened the season with a 9-0 win over the Blue Streaks.

Ross coach Cheryl Schell said the top billing in the sectional comes as no surprise.

"I'm not surprised at all because (pitcher) Jodi Kusmer and those guys are veterans," Schell said. "We've got a lot of the juniors and I'm not surprised at all. I think we're kind of excited about the tournament.

The Blue Streaks (1-9) would be the underdog, "as long as we don't overlook them," Schell said.

Ross slides by Sandusky



News-Messenger/Steven Garner

ERIN LYTLE of Fremont Ross slides safely into second with a stolen base in the bottom of the first inning Wednesday. Sandusky shortstop Khaisha Alexander takes the throw. The Little Giants won the sectional matchup played at Tiffin Columbian to advance to the May 19 district tournament.

Pelfrey pitches most of 7-1 win against Blue Streaks

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SOFTBALL

Sectional tournament

Wednesday's results
Fremont Ross 7, Sandusky 1
Margaretta 4, Clyde 3
Today's Games, 5 p.m.
Northwood vs. Gibsonburg,
at Woodville;
Woodmore vs. Emmanuel Baptist,
at Woodville.

ly was history, as Pelfrey gunned down would-be bases-tealer Mandy Miller at second base.

Pelfrey makes no bones about it. Behind home is where the heart is.

"I told everybody, 'Guys, this is the first time I've been relaxed in this game.' From the time we got on the bus until now, I just had this weird feeling," Pelfrey said about the pitching change.

Whatever that feeling was, Pelfrey might want to bottle it. In 4 2/3 innings, she struck out eight and allowed only three hits in lifting her record to 3-1. She recorded six of her first seven outs on K's.

"She got the job done. She got us five innings and that took time off of Kooz's arm," Ross coach Cheryl Schell said. "When she settled down, she did fine."

Pelfrey had made just two starts prior to Wednesday.

"I don't know what the feeling was, I was tense," she said. "From the time we got out of school I was tense. I don't know, my mentality wasn't there, I guess. It was just a weird feeling. ... I get myself psyched out sometimes."

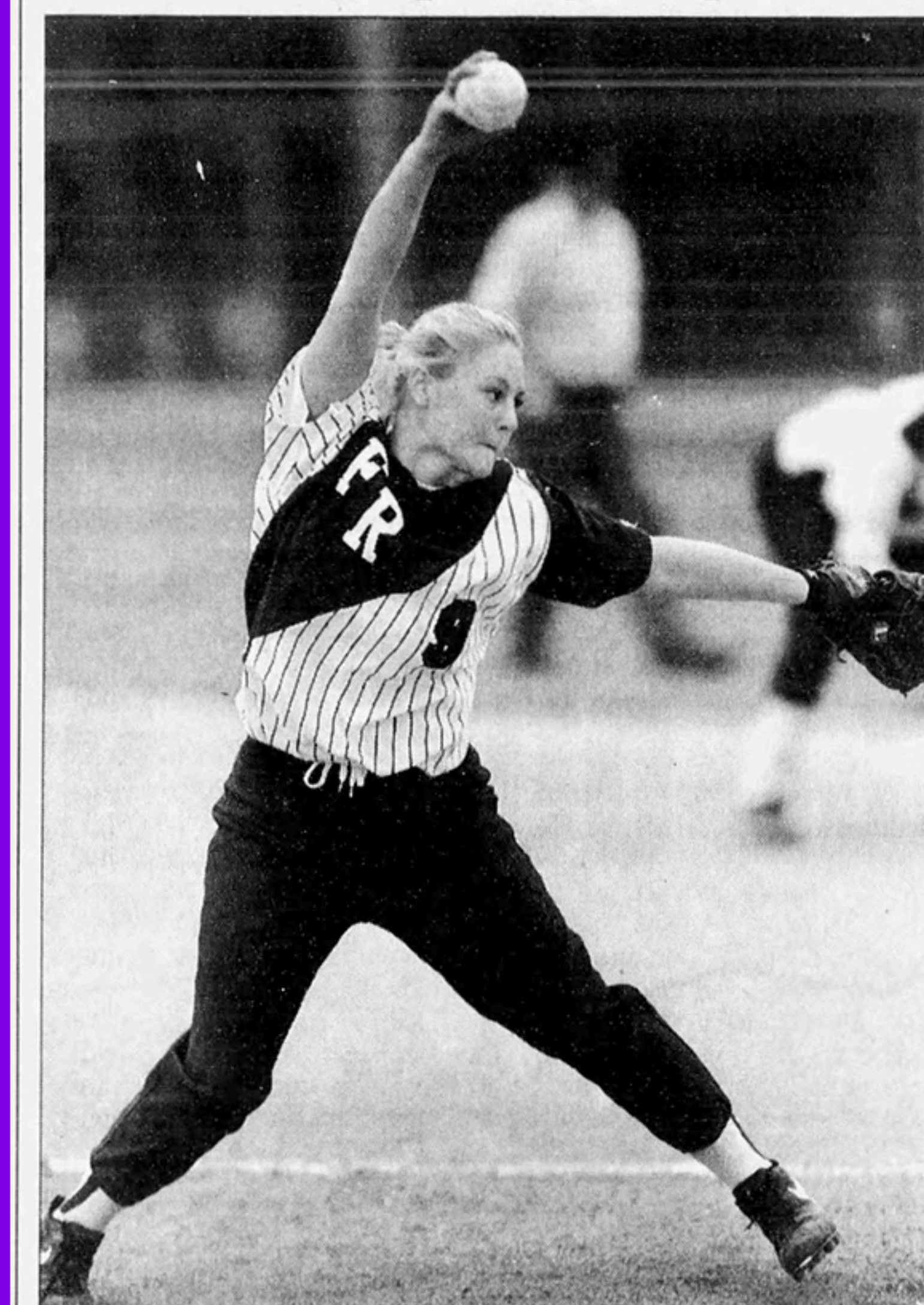
Pelfrey added a 2-for-4, two-RBI performance at the plate, including a run-scoring double in the sixth inning that accounted for Ross's final run.

The biggest clout of the Little Giants' 10-hit attack was Jenny Schaaf's solo home run that

See PELFREY PLAYS, B4



Pelfrey plays pitch and catch for Ross



News-Messenger/Steven Garner

NICKI PELFREY of Fremont Ross pitches during the Little Giants' 7-1 sectional win against Sandusky Wednesday at Tiffin Columbian. Pelfrey pitched 5 2/3 innings before yielding to Jodi Kusmer, who recorded her first save. The Little Giants will return to Tiffin May 19 for the district tournament.

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triggered a three-run third inning. Continuing her catch-me-if-you-can tear as the leadoff hitter, Schaaf fell into an 0-and-2 hole against losing pitcher Erinn Green (1-7) before depositing the next pitch into a mound of dirt beyond the left-centerfield fence to give Ross a 2-0 lead.

"She didn't realize it until she rounded second," Schell said. "She was going nuts. I said, 'Jenny, it's out of the park, slow down.' She was dumbfounded, she couldn't believe it and she finished up with a semi-trot. I don't think she knows how to react to that kind of thing."

The Little Giants continued the rally with two outs. After Jodi Fick doubled on one hop against the left field fence, Pelfrey drove her in with a single to left. Pelfrey later scored on a double steal.

"The home run knocked some air out of us for a while, but we bounced back, too, after an inning," Sandusky coach Renee Jackson said.

In the fifth, leadoff hitter Erin Notestine, who saved her team several runs with some fine glove work at third base, reached on an error, stole second and was sacrificed to third by Khaisha Alexander. The No. 3 hitter, Shannon Williams, drove in Notestine with a sacrifice fly.

After Kizzy Black walked, Pelfrey prolonged the inning with a throwing error on Regina Alexander's roller back to the box, prompting Schell to call on Kus-

mer with runners at the corners. "The main reason I did that was because they had first and third, and I wanted Nicki behind the plate for a more experienced catcher," Schell said. "That's a tough situation and Jodi (Fick) hasn't had a lot of work with those situations."

Pelfrey threw out Miller with time to spare.

"Nicki got the job done," Schell said.

Michele Smith, who went 3-for-4, sparked a two-run rally in the bottom of the fifth when she made it to third on a bunt and scored on Jamie Hinkle's double to make it 6-1.

The game ended when Smith turned a foul out into a double play at first base.

"Defensively, yes, the talent's there, but there's just no ifs, ands or buts about it, we're struggling with our hitting," Jackson said. "This game it took us four innings to get going before we actually made contact with the ball. Our day will come, and I believe it, but Fremont's a great team. You can't take anything away from Fremont Ross."

LITTLE GIANTS NOTES: The save was Kusmer's first of the season. ... The Little Giants won't return to tournament action until May 19, when they will play the winner of the Ashland sectional at Columbian. The immediate challenge for Ross is to wrap up its Great Lakes League conquest. Wins over Bedford Friday and Fostoria Tuesday will do the trick.