

LITTLE GIANTS BOW OUT OF TOURNAMENT

Whitmer defeats Fox, Ross

By TIM HARMON
Staff writer

SYLVANIA — Steve Fox is a smart pitcher. The junior right-hander from Fremont Ross is also a bulldog on the mound.

Fox battled Toledo Whitmer for six innings Saturday in the Class AAA sectional title game before Chad Whiting's two-run, game-winning single in the bottom of the seventh.

Whitmer's 5-4 victory at Northview High School lifted the top-seeded Panthers into the district tournament at the Lucas County Recreation Center.

Fox showed his pitching smartness afterwards.

"My first mistake was walking the first guy (number nine hitter Matt Wilson to start the seventh)," Fox said. "Whitmer is a great-hitting team. They're all first-ball hitters, and you can't

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throw the ball down the pipe.

"You have to work the corners; I felt I worked the corners but at times I put the ball over the plate.

"That's when they hit it."

Whiting hit a one-ball pitch, sending a bouncing ball past the outstretched glove of Ross shortstop Scott Mezinger.

"He hit a curveball," Fox said.

Said Ross coach Dan Fought, "He hit a great pitch; he just stayed with it."

Wilson, who advanced to second on Mark Szymkowiak's sacrifice bunt, and Ron Lukasik

scored on Whiting's hit. Wilson moved to third on Lukasik's bloop single to right field and Lukasik took second on Chris Benson's throw to the plate.

Fought said the thought of walking Whiting to lead the bases crossed his mind only slightly.

"Steve was struggling in the last two innings ... getting behind in the count," Fought said. "If you put (Whiting) on, you've got no leeway."

"I know it sets up the double play, but (a bases-loaded walk) was the only thing that crossed my mind."

The Panthers, 19-2, play Maumee in the district semifinals Saturday. Maumee defeated Toledo DeVilbiss 17-2 in a sectional

title game Saturday.

"It's tough to beat a team three times," Whitmer coach Rob Rose said. "I've got a lot of compliments for their pitcher. He kept us off balance."

The Little Giants, 9-9, took the Panthers out of their running game thanks to catcher Tate Young, who gunned down two straight runners to end the third inning.

Ross took a 4-3 lead in the top of the seventh. Terry Carter, who had three hits including a double, reached second base on Whitmer third baseman Andy Follas' throwing error and went to third on Mark Wietrzykowski's wild pitch.

Left-hander Scott Stalker re-

lieved Wietrzykowski, inheriting a 2-0 count on Chad Novitski. Stalker threw a called third strike past Novitski.

Following Novitski's strikeout, Carter scored on Mezinger's groundout to second.

Whitmer took a 2-0 lead in the second inning. Follas led off with a single and Eric Fritz followed with a triple. Fritz scored on Wilson's single two outs later.

Ross scored single runs in the third and fourth to tie the score.

In the third, Carter and Nick Wolf singled to open the inning and Carter scored on Mezinger's single to center.

In the fourth, Young worked Wietrzykowski for a walk after 12 pitches. Fox sacrificed Young to

second, and Young scored on Justin Perry's single to left one out later.

Fritz singled, advanced to second on a passed ball, moved to third on a fielder's choice and scored on Burl Steele's groundout to first — giving Whitmer a 3-2 lead after four innings.

Ross pulled even in the fifth on Carter's double and Mezinger's ground single to center.

"We played exactly the way we wanted to," Fought said.

"Anytime you can get a team that scored 35 runs off of you into a two-inning game, you've got a great chance of winning."

Whitmer beat Ross 19-13 and 16-9 earlier this season.