

GIANTS MAKE QUICK EXIT FROM TOURNAMENT

Giants miss final chance

Ross leaves winning run at second in loss

By MICHAEL PIDANICK
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MANSFIELD — The tournament season was too much like the regular season for the Fremont Ross baseball team.

The Little Giants squandered opportunity after opportunity Saturday afternoon and dropped a 9-8 decision to Mansfield Senior in a Division I sectional tournament semifinal at Arlin Field.

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The Little Giants left 12 runners on base — including 10 in scoring position — and potential tying-run Dash Yost and potential winning-run Dustin Shively were stuck at third and second respectively, as the final three outs of the game were made.

"It's been like that all year," said Ross coach Chuck Lindsey, after his team fell to 4-14. "We just can't get that big hit. We just couldn't get it done."

Mansfield (5-16) collected five home runs — three coming off the bat of red-hot sophomore Brian White — and advanced to the sectional final against Ashland.

The Little Giants had no trouble getting on base against Tygers pitcher Charles Drengberg, but the senior left-hander was able to escape numerous jams in the complete-game victory. He gave up 10 hits, walked seven and gave up eight earned runs.

But with the game on the line, he got the three outs he needed to pick up his third win of the season.

"He talked me out of bringing the other pitcher in," said Mansfield coach Jack Soliday. "In my heart, I wanted him to finish because he is a senior, and he deserved the chance. And he came through for us in the end."

Ross leaves 12 on base, falls to Mansfield 9-8

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Barely.

Mansfield led 9-7 entering the last of the seventh, but Drengberg walked Gabe Sanchez and John Meggitt to start the inning. Shively laid down a perfect sacrifice bunt, and Drengberg's throw to first was errant allowing Sanchez to score and pinch-runner Yost to reach third. Shively stole second on the next pitch, putting the winning run in scoring position for the meat of Ross's order.

But Josh Lozano's sharp grounder up the middle was speared by Drengberg, who looked Yost back and threw to first. Aaron Hines followed with a fly ball to medium-deep right field. Yost tagged and came halfway, but retreated when the throw home was perfect. Nick Lance grounded out to end the game.

"We just couldn't get a break,"

Lindsey said. "When you've got guys on second and third, and your best hitter coming up, with no out, you should be in good shape."

While the Little Giants struggled in the clutch situations, the Tygers thrived in their big opportunities.

With two outs, Mansfield was 10-for-17 and scored six of its nine runs.

White was nearly a one-man wrecking crew at the plate. He was 3-for-4 with five RBI, to go with his third, fourth and fifth home runs of the week. He hit nearly .600 during the week for the Tygers, bringing his average close to the .400 mark for the year.

"He's really come on," Soliday said. "He's had a heck of a week. He's a good hitter, a good athlete, and he keeps getting better."

Back-to-back home runs by White and Corey Chatman highlighted a four-run rally for

Mansfield in the top of the first. Ross closed to within 4-2 in the bottom of the second on an RBI single by Meggitt and a bases-loaded walk by Lozano.

A two-run shot by White extended the lead to 6-2 in the top of the fifth, but the Little Giants rallied in the bottom of the inning.

Kyle Hintze, T.J. Hammer and Jeremy Fitzgerald collected consecutive singles to load the bases, and pinch-hitter Pete Goetz reached on an error that allowed Hintze to score. Meggitt blooped a single to right to score Hammer and Fitzgerald, and Shively's base hit plated Goetz with the tying run. Lozano's sacrifice fly to left scored Meggitt to give Ross a 7-6 lead.

The lead was short-lived, however, as White parked a two-run shot to put the Tygers ahead to stay. Darren Heuss led off the seventh with a solo shot to left for Mansfield's ninth run.

Ross pitcher Kyle Myers

pitched six innings and gave up 10 hits and nine earned runs. He struck out three and walked just one. Tony Aldrich came on after Heuss' homer and retired the final three hitters in order.

Four of the Tygers' five home runs were over the centerfield fence, which is just 340 feet from home plate.

"Those are fly balls that were home runs," Lindsey said. "But at the same time, we didn't get it up. Kyle didn't pitch as good a game as he has in the past, but, still, he kept us in the ballgame."

White finished the afternoon 3-for-4 with five RBI. Heuss was 3-for-4 with two RBI. Josh Stutz was 2-for-4 with a run and Nick Sazdanoff was 2-for-3 with an RBI for the Tygers.

"Usually we don't hit for much power," Soliday said. "The Fremont pitcher was giving us the power to hit it out. The pitchers provide the power, you just have to meet the ball."

"When you've got guys on second and third and your best hitter coming up, with no out, you should be in good shape."

— Chuck Lindsey,
Ross coach

For the Little Giants, Hammer was 4-for-4. Meggitt was 2-for-3 with three RBI. Lozano drove in a pair of runs and Sanchez scored three times.

Mansfield meets second-seed Ashland on Tuesday.

In the first game Saturday, Sandusky defeated Tiffin Columbian 6-5. The Blue Streaks meet top-seed Mansfield Madison on Tuesday.

The Little Giants are at Toledo Whitmer on Wednesday in a Great Lakes League game.