

Tournament Short Lived for Giants

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HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL TOURNAMENT: ASHLAND 6, FREMONT ROSS 5

Ashland's Turner stills Little Giants' bats

Ross postseason ends; three games remain in GBC slate

By KYLE TIMMONS
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MANSFIELD — Ashland coach Harley Eichhorn did his homework for Monday's Division I sectional championship matchup against Fremont Ross.

But it was the Arrows' pitcher, Tyler Turner, that passed the test as Ashland stymied the Little Giants' explosive offense by throwing a lot of off-speed pitches and prevailing 6-5.

"Fremont swings the bats better than anyone

I've seen this year," Eichhorn said. "I felt like we had a real nice preparation for Fremont.

"We have an excellent scout, one of our personnel, and he said that this team is going to hit fastballs. The key to that was getting ahead in the count, because if you get behind, then you have to lay it in there and then you are in trouble."

Turner fanned eight Little Giants and gave up just five hits in six innings of work giving Ashland the opportunity to pull ahead after a rocky first inning.

"Give (Turner) credit," said Ross coach Andy Dennings. "He kept us off balance and we just didn't show enough discipline at the plate."

After tallying one run in the top of the first and leaving the bases loaded, the Arrows made an early miscue to give Fremont an early advantage.

With two outs, senior Aaron Opelt hit a fly ball to right field and Ashland junior Ryan Hammer misplayed the ball in the sun as Opelt advanced to second on the error.

Eichhorn elected to intentionally walk Kyle Cook setting the table for senior Robbie Hall.

Opelt and Cook moved up a base on a passed ball by the Arrows (14-9) and Hall followed by ripping a 2-run single to center putting Fremont up 2-1.

The score remained that way until the top of the

fourth when Ross pitcher Mike Abbott got into some two-out trouble.

Hammer slapped a single to right and Brandon Harris drew a walk setting the plate for Ashland first baseman Jarrod Parks.

Parks crushed Abbott's first pitch and the ball wrapped around the left field foul pole to give the Arrows a 4-2 lead.

Turner continued to fend off Fremont's potent lineup until Billy Boukissen came to bat with two outs in the bottom of the sixth.

After Boukissen walked, junior Ryan Ottney drove his second homer of the year over the Jeep sign in left center to tie the game at 4-4.

"(The home run) was

kind of a downer," Eichhorn said. "(Turner) had that 3-2 pitch that was close to the corner and he didn't get the call. But then he made a mistake and Fremont is a very good team and if you make a mistake a good hitter hits it out."

But Ashland showed a sign of resiliency in the seventh as Andrew Spicer dropped an RBI double into the left field corner with one out and Toby Lentz contributed another RBI double an out later to give the advantage back to the Arrows at 6-4.

"That was pivotal," said Eichhorn. "In this kind of situation, especially in a tied ball game, the last guy with the bat has the great advantage. Those two runs

were big."

Dennings agreed with Eichhorn.

"It kills you," said Dennings of turning the lead back over to the Arrows. "You get a big momentum swing and then you have a four pitch walk. That plays right into their hands."

Fremont then turned their tournament hopes to one last at-bat.

With one out, Abbott jumped on a 1-0 pitch and hit a single to right field.

Opelt followed with a single of his own to right moving Abbott to third with one out.

Cook then hit a grounder to first in which Abbott scored to pull the Little

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Ross postseason ends

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Giants to within one and putting Opelt in scoring position with two outs before Hall was retired on the final play, popping out to the third baseman.

"(Fremont) is a good team and we'd like to think that we're a good team," Eichhorn said. "When two good teams get together you have a one-run ballgame, and tournament time is going to do that."

With the tournament now behind

them, the Little Giants (17-6) must regroup and turn their attention to their attempt to win back-to-back Greater Buckeye Conference championships.

"We just have to play with a little pride," said Dennings. "We have a chance to go back-to-back GBC champs and you have one week left to do it. Seniors, it's your last hurrah, you've only got three more games."

Fremont will host Findlay today as the Little Giants have a one-game lead in the conference.