



May 6, 2009

Little Giants tag Trojans' ace in GBC win

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FINDLAY -- Solid defense has been the backbone of the Fremont Ross softball team all season.

On Tuesday against Findlay in a key Greater Buckeye Conference match, the Little Giants' gloves once again proved to be the difference. Ross got a complete game two-hit shutout from Jordyn Gallagher and played error-free defense on way to a 4-0 victory over the home Trojans to keep pace in the GBC race.

Gallagher finished her evening with 10 strikeouts on the Ross mound and would allow just two Trojan base runners as she faced one batter over the minimum.

Supporting Gallagher was a Ross offense that pounded out nine hits against Findlay ace Maggie Gilliland, a first-team All-GBC selection from a year ago and the conference Co-Pitcher of the Year. Most of that damage came from the bottom half of the Little Giants order.

Christy Meggitt led the Little Giants (11-6, 7-4) with three hits from the six-hole, while Tayler Redinger had two hits and a team-leading two RBI from the five-hole.

Ross had just three hits thru five innings, till it exploded for four runs on six hits in the final two innings. The Little Giants scored twice in the sixth inning and platted two more runs in the seventh.

"Maggie (Gilliland) is a great pitcher," said Ross coach Mike Gilbert. "We had difficulty with her last year.

"For us to score four runs is unusual ... the kids really came through tonight."

Both hurlers sat down the opposition in order in the first inning, before Ross threatened to score the game's first runs in the second. A leadoff double by Casey Clark followed by back-to-back bunt singles from Redinger and Meggitt had the bases loaded for the Little Giants with no one out.

Gilliland and the Trojans (9-8, 4-1) got out of the jam though, as she got Tashia Novitski, Missy Lewis and Alexis Schneider to all go done on strikes to end the inning.

Findlay wouldn't be able to capitalize on the momentum though as Gallagher held Trojans hitless thru three innings.

Finally in the fourth, the Trojans found the hit column as Gilliland tried to help herself on the mound with a two-out triple. However, Gallagher recovered quickly and got Jessica Girard to go down swinging for her third strikeout of the inning.

It would be the last serious threat put on by the Trojan offense.

"The biggest difference in Jordyn this year is she's showing more guts," said Gilbert of Gallagher's

pitching. "When teams get a big hit against her she bears down and gets the next batter ... she's been great all year."

Findlay coach Tim Babcock would agree.

"Jordyn had a good plan and she executed it well," said Babcock. "She's a solid pitcher ... we got the upper-hand on her a few times last year and hopefully we'll do better against her on Thursday."

With the scoreless game open for the taking yet in the top of the sixth, the Little Giants bats once again woke up. Only this time, unlike in the second inning, they would finish the job.

MacKenzie Schneider led-off the Little Giant's sixth frame with a single to right field and then scored the winning run just two batters later. Clark singled to short to move Schneider to second prior to a steal of the third and a single by Redinger bringing her across the plate.

Sara Gowitzka, pinch-running for Clark, also scored for Ross in the frame as Novitski drew an RBI walk.

The Little Giants tacked on two unearned runs in the seventh, taking advantage of two Trojan errors to finish the scoring.

Gilliland ended her outing surrendering just two earned runs on nine hits with eight strikeouts and one walk. A total of nine Ross baserunners would be stranded.

"Fremont played a great game," said Babcock. "They got clutch hits, they slapped some balls and bunted some balls that we didn't react to and those were key hits."

The two teams will meet again on Thursday at Fremont's Alumni Fields.

"I can't say good enough things about this team's performance," said Gilbert. "We needed this win to have a chance at the league title yet → we played good defense, got great pitching and timely hitting.

"Defensively this is the strongest team we've had in a few years and it's really starting to show and pay off."
