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Little Giants' league lead evaporates with loss

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The Fremont Ross baseball team may look back at the end of the season and wish it had the first two innings back of Friday's game with Greater Buckeye Conference rival Sandusky.

Ross, leading the GBC coming into the game, spotted the second-place Blue Streaks six runs (four unearned) in the first two innings before battling back to tie Sandusky, and then take the lead. Unfortunately for the Little Giants, though, a two-run top of the seventh for Sandusky would wind up being too much to overcome, as Ross fell 11-10 and saw its league lead expire.

"We didn't come out prepared," said Ross coach Mark King. "You can't come out in a game like this with all these conference ramifications on the line and spot a team like (Sandusky) six runs -- especially a team that plays as well as they play."

A costly throwing error by Ross third baseman Josh Mendoza on a ball hit by Trey Keegan brought the game-winning run across for Sandusky. Zak Esposito, who led off the Sandusky innings with a walk, was able to come around and score from second as Mendoza's throw to first sailed over the head of first baseman Jay Cominsky.

The game-winning play for the Streaks (12-5, 4-1) came one play after Mike Drake tied the game at 10 all with an RBI-double to left.

"Walking the lead-off guy and then giving up the double down the left field line was heart-breaking," said King. "To come back and be three outs away from a big victory ... it was tough to let things slip.

"But I'm extremely proud of my kids that they came back and that they fought all the way back to not only tie it, but take the lead."

Still it was the first two innings that cost the Little Giants (8-7, 4-1) the most. Errors, something the Little Giants haven't had cost them games since the beginning of the year, would be the main culprit.

Ross starter Cameron Hord, coming back from injury, would take the brunt of those errors, giving up six runs (two earned) on six hits with two strikeouts.

However, Hord would allow a single base hit to the first four batters of the game for the Streaks, as the Ross infield misplayed two groundballs.

The Streaks scored four unearned runs in the first and added two more runs in the second to lead 6-0 after two.

"Bottom line is we didn't make plays behind Cameron," said King. "He's out of the first inning with no runs with we make three plays.

"We haven't had mistakes in the field like that the last 10 games and that's exactly what we did the

first three games - give teams extra outs and extra opportunities."

Dexter Foos would relieve Hord in the third and pitch the final five innings for the Little Giants allowing five runs (four earned) on five hits. He would be saddled with the loss despite putting up zeros in the third and fourth innings that allowed Ross to cut the lead to one.

After facing just 14 batters thru three innings, Sandusky's Esposito, would finally be touched up by the Ross offense in the fourth. He would allow all five runs (four earned) and four hits against him in the inning.

T.J. Harkness and Brad Wolesslagel would both collect two RBI in the inning, as the Streaks led 6-5 after four. Harkness would finish 2-for-4, while Wolesslagel finished 2-for-3 with a double and a team-leading three RBI.

After Sandusky re-upped its lead with two runs in the top of the fifth, Ross took a 10-8 lead with another five-run inning.

"We hoping to get (Ross) down and keep them down, but they're a good team," said Sandusky coach Matt Martin. "It felt good to jump out on them early ... we tried to play a little small-ball after that and it shot us in the foot a bit."

Down two runs the Streaks platted a single run on Foos in the sixth, while new relief pitcher Brady Smith kept Ross at bay for the final two and 2/3 innings.

The Streaks would finish the game with 10 hits and a single error. Ross would finish with seven hits and five errors, as it benefited from nine free passes given up by Streak pitchers.

"We walked and hit too many guys," said Martin. "But being off all week will do that to you."

Both squads would leave a total of eight runners left on base.

"We're 4-1 in the league and tied with them," said King. "So we're far from out of the league ... we just need to get back at it next week."
