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Ross baffled by freshman

BY JEFF ARENZ
Sports writer

Gilbert-Schneider renew father-daughter rivalry

FREMONT -- Freshman pitcher Casey Akenberger took a giant step forward against the Fremont Ross Little Giants on Wednesday at Alumni Field.

Akenberger, who made her first varsity start a memorable one for Bowling Green, tossed a four-hit shutout with 10 strikeouts as the Bobcats blanked Ross 6-0 in the softball season opener for both teams.

"She saw some playing time in scrimmages, but looking at what Casey did today, you would never know if she was nervous or not," said Bowling Green coach Erin Schneider. "She performed inside the circle and she performed at the plate, laying down a bunt when she was having problems making contact. Casey did everything we asked."

Schneider, now in her fourth year at Bowling Green, is a 1998 graduate of Ross who played first base for Little Giants. On Wednesday, she faced her alma mater and matched wits against her father, Ross coach Mike Gilbert.

"It wasn't much fun at all because her team played better," Gilbert said of coaching against his daughter. "But I am proud of her because she is building a pretty good program over there."

Schneider improved to 3-1 in games against Gilbert.

Five of the six runs scored by the Bobcats came after two outs had been recorded.

Hayley Williford, Bowling Green's No. 9 hitter, broke a scoreless tie in the second inning with a two-out single that blooped in between Ross second baseman Christy Meggitt and first baseman Tashia Novitski.

The hit came after a defensive play from Meggitt kept the game scoreless. After Ross third baseman Ashley Saionz scooped up the ball on Brittany Stalter's sacrifice bunt, Meggitt ran to cover first base, leapt high above the bag to grab the throw from Saionz and landed on the base to retire Stalter.

The play kept Brittany Davis at third base, after she led off the inning with a walk and moved to second on a sacrifice bunt from Becca Ruehl.

In the first inning, Meggitt's relay throw to Little Giants' catcher Casey Clark was in time to cut down Megan LeGalley, who was attempting to score on Kara Bihn's two-out double over Ross right fielder Sarah Gowitzka.

The initial inning ended when Little Giants' pitcher Jordan Gallagher struck out Akenberger on three pitches. But in the second inning, Williford followed with an RBI-single off Gallagher that produced the

only run Bowling Green needed.

At the plate, Ross hitters were baffled by Akenberger, who sent down the side in order four different times. After Clark gave the Little Giants a lead-off double in the second inning, Meggitt was called out for stepping on home plate during a sacrifice attempt before Akenberger retired Novitski and Saionz on strikes.

Ross's only other scoring threat came in the fifth inning, when singles by Novitski and Tayler Redinger put Little Giants on first and second with two outs. Davis, the Bowling Green catcher, allowed the Ross runners to move up a base after a passed ball went back to the screen.

But Akenberger made the pitch the Bobcats needed. When she struck out Saionz for the second time, the Little Giants' scoring threat ended in the fifth.

"The beat us in every phase of the game," Gilbert said. "They played a lot better than we did."

Schneider praised Davis for calling the right pitches.

"Our catcher calls her own game and together (with Akenberger) they got the W," Schneider said. "Casey throws seven different pitches -- curveball, screwball, fastball, riseball, dropball, changeup and off-speed. Sometimes Brittany needs to use two hands to call pitches."

Meggitt's single in the seventh inning was Ross's final hit.

Bowling Green (1-0 overall) broke the game open by scoring five times in the fourth. The Bobcats generated six hits in the frame off Gallagher, who lasted five innings and allowed six earned runs on 13 hits. She added two walks and five strikeouts.

Davis and Tayler Worthington hit RBI-singles in the Bowling Green fifth while Bihn drove in two on a single to center field. Akenberger gave herself more insurance by hitting an RBI-triple to the left-center field gap.

Gallagher was replaced inside the pitcher's circle by Novitski, who pitched two scoreless innings with two strikeouts.

Ross (0-1 overall) hosts non-conference opponent Port Clinton at 4:30 p.m. today.



Fremont Ross hitter Tayler Redinger waits for a pitch from Bowling Green hurler Casey Akenberger during a non-conference softball game Monday at Alumni Field. (Jennifer Young-Bower | News-Messenger correspondent)

Fremont Ross catcher Casey Clark fields the ball as a Bowling Green baserunner attempts to score at Alumni Field on Monday. (Jennifer Young-Bower | News-Messenger correspondent)