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Ross splits with Rockets

BY JEFF ARENZ
Sports writer

FREMONT -- A stiff wind to left field created havoc for pitchers and fielders while Fremont Ross and Oak Harbor hitters teed off during a non-conference baseball doubleheader Saturday at Alumni Fields.

The result was a split for the Little Giants and Rockets, who played a pair of 10-run rule contests. Ross recorded a 15-5 win in Game 1 before Oak Harbor posted an 18-7 victory in Game 2.

The teams combined for 45 runs and 47 hits in 10 innings. Amazingly, just four errors were committed.

GAME 1

The bottom half of the Little Giants' batting order generated 10 hits and scored 10 runs, helping Ross to overcome a 2-0 deficit after one-half inning with a pair of five-run frames in the second and third.

No. 6 hitter Jake Hiestand collected three singles and No. 9 hitter Brandon Graeter ripped a single, a double and a triple in three at-bats as the Little Giants built a 10-3 lead after three innings and a 13-4 edge through four frames. No. 8 hitter Tyler Hasselbach went 2-for-2 with a second-inning two-run home run and a fourth-inning single. No. 7 hitter Josh Mendoza added a single and a double for Ross.

Little Giants' Stephen Stout and T.J. Harkness combined for seven RBI. No. 2 hitter Stout drove in four runners, two on a second-inning triple and two with a third-inning home run. Lead-off hitter Harkness cleared the bases with a three-run, third-inning double.

Derek Aldrich (single, double) and Brad Waggoner (two singles) each added two hits for Ross.

Cory Rohrbacher was the winning pitcher after scattering five runs and seven hits over five innings. He walked two and struck out three. Alex Bores took the loss by allowing nine earned runs on nine hits in 2 1/3 innings. He walked one and struck out none before being relieved by Greg Diefenthaler.

"In Game 1, we had good intensity and great at-bats," Ross coach Mark King said. "Cory did what he had to do to get a win for us. These kids are starting to develop into what we want and they are seeing success."

Despite starting 0-3 this season, the Little Giants 7-3 during their last 10 games. Ross hitters did not strikeout once during Game 1.

Anthony Lattimore had two hits -- a single and a solo home run -- for Oak Harbor, which received a single and a double from Diefenthaler. Josh Warnke tripled and scored in the third, while Ryan Groff singled during the Rockets' two-run first and Damion McAtee hit an RBI single in the fifth.

"In Game 1, Ross hit the ball well and their bats found the holes and, in Game 2, we hit the ball well and our bats found the holes," Oak Harbor coach Rob Schimoeller said. "That's about all you can say about a day like this. It was really tough to play defense, but we didn't commit any errors."

The Little Giants had one error in Game 1 and three more in Game 2.

GAME 2

The Little Giants grabbed a 3-2 lead after one inning, but the Rockets answered with 11 tallies during their next two frames. Oak Harbor, which was ahead 13-5 after three innings, was in control for much of the game.

Lattimore tied the contest at 3 by leading off the Oak Harbor second with a solo home run. He was the only hitter on either team to hit a home run in each game and was walked during his final three times at the plate.

Despite going 0-for-1, Diefenthaler walked four times and scored the go-ahead run for the Rockets on an infield groundout by Phil O'Shea in the second. O'Shea went on to collect a single and an RBI double.

Oak Harbor (6-6 overall) received a balanced attack with five different hitters having two hits apiece. In addition to O'Shea, Warnke and Alex Pavlica each had a single and a double, Grof and D.J. Everett each hit two singles. Dillon Stiger added second-inning single.

"You have to give Oak Harbor credit for hitting the ball," King said. "It was like playing in Candlestick Park (the former home stadium of the San Francisco Giants, which was known for having swirling wind patterns). I think both teams benefitted from a few wind-blown hits."

Harkness, Stout and Cominsky led Ross (7-6 overall) at the plate with each collecting a single and a double. Graeter, who had five hits in the twin-bill, including a pair of singles in the nightcap, is 7-for-8 during his last three games.

Hiestand added a double for the Little Giants, while Rohrbacher chipped in a single.

Warnke picked up the pitching victory in relief of Everett, who lasted only 1 1/3 innings and allowed five earned runs on five hits with one walk and three strikeouts. Warnke was more effective for Oak Harbor, giving up two earned runs on five hits with one walk and four strikeouts in 3 2/3 innings.

The Rockets chased Ross starter Mendoza from the mound after 2 innings. He gave up nine runs (eight earned runs) on nine hits with three walks and one strikeout. Harkness worked two relief innings before Aldrich threw one relief frame.

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Fremont Ross shortstop Derek Aldrich throws to third to try and pick off Oak Harbor's lead runner during Game 2 of a non-conference doubleheader Saturday at Alumni Fields. (Doug Hise | News-Messenger correspondent)