

## Rockets sweep Little Giants

BY KEVIN SHIELDS • Sports Writer • April 5, 2010

OAK HARBOR -- Last week left a sour taste in the mouth of Oak Harbor senior Damian McAtee.

McAtee and his Rocket teammates started the season 0-2, getting run-ruled in losses to Genoa and St. Joseph Central Catholic.

But on Saturday, McAtee recorded a save in game one of Oak Harbor's double header sweep of Fremont Ross and had a solid start in game two. The Rockets won the opener 4-2 in clear and breezy conditions and won the final game 6-4 in rainy, gale force conditions.

"It was kind of deflating to go up 7-1 on St. Joe last week and then see them come back to beat us 21-11," McAtee said. "That was definitely a little sour for us. But we came out with a lot of intensity today and we did well. We threw strikes and hit the ball -- so it was a good day."

After playing behind the plate for five innings in game one, McAtee came out to relieve starter Brian Mallernee in the sixth inning with the Rockets (2-2) up 4-2. He'd allow a single base runner, giving up a hit and recording a strikeout.

Oak Harbor had six hits to four for the Little Giants (1-3) in game one, but found ways to manufacture runs unlike their counterpart.

"We didn't swing the bat quite as well as we had in the other two games," Rockets coach Rob Schimmoeller said. "We definitely manufactured some runs in these two games."

AJ Cecil's RBI-base hit in the second inning gave the Rockets the early 1-0 edge in the opener. The run was scored by Joey Mallernee who reached on an error by the Ross second baseman.

"When we made mistakes, it always cost us," said Little Giants coach Mark King. "We made three or four mistakes in this double header and all three or four mistakes scored."

Ross plated a single run in third to tie the game at 1-1, but a Brian Mallernee double to left gave the Rockets a 3-1 edge in the bottom-half of the inning.

Alex Pavlica drove home another runner in the fourth for Oak Harbor and an error brought home a Ross score in the fifth.

It was one of a few breaks the Little Giants got against Brian Mallernee. The right-handed sophomore allowed two runs (one earned) on three hits, striking out eight and walking one.

"He just got ahead in the count and then he battled," Schimmoeller said. "He didn't give in to anybody. He was able to throw three pitches for strikes -- his fastball, his slider and his change up -- and he dominated the bottom of their order."

"I was happy that things went better than my last outing," Brian Mallernee joked. "Throwing first-pitch strikes helped out and we had good defense and the wind was a pitcher's wind too."

Brian was helped by Joey Mallernee, who finished game one 2-for-3 at the dish with two RBIs. He was one of two Rockets with multiple RBIs in the finale, going 1-for-2 with a two-RBI double in the fourth inning. His hit gave the Rockets a 3-1 lead after trailing through one and a half innings when Jake Hiestand singled home a run for Ross in the second.

Hiestand's hit was the first of two for the Little Giants in game two, as again, the Rockets pitching was solid. McAtee started, going three innings and surrendering one hit and one unearned run. He gave way to Alex Bores, who got credit for the win, tossing three innings with one hit against him, three runs (one earned), tallying two strikeouts.

After the Rockets had three runs cross in the fifth to go up 6-2, the Little Giants made things interesting in the sixth. Jordan Garcia ripped an RBI-double to deep left and Cory Rohrbacher scored on a wild pitch.

Still, it wasn't the effort their coach expected.

"I'm disappointed with the effort we got at the plate," King said. "It's not that we didn't hit the ball well, it was the approach we took. We were using our front foot and swinging at the wrong pitches in the wrong counts."

"We just weren't mechanically there and didn't get the right kind of swings. We should've been getting the ball down and making them make a play instead of trying to drive the ball in gail force winds."

Garcia finished with four hits in the two contests to top Ross, also scoring two runs.



Fremont's Cory Rohrbacher pitches during the first of a doubleheader on Saturday afternoon against Oak Harbor. (Jennifer Young-Bower | News-Messenger correspondent)