

1997 Division I Sectional Tournament

Sectional Girls Basketball Tournaments

Dowell hits game-winners in OT

By MICHAEL BOSI
Staff writer

WILLARD — Survival. That's the name of the game once the postseason begins.

Dig a nine-point hole, and you're playing with fire.

Throw in overtime, and it simply becomes Russian roulette.

Lucky for the Fremont Ross girls basketball team, Emily Dowell was the hand left holding the gun Tuesday night.

The Little Giants needed Dowell's 15 second-half points and two free throws with four seconds left in overtime to down Ashland, 51-50, in their Division I sectional opener.

Tuesday
Fremont Ross 51
Ashland 50

Saturday
Fremont Ross vs. Mansfield Madison
In Div. I Sectional at Willard
6:30 p.m.

"I didn't want our season to end. I felt that someone had to take over and I decided that I wanted to," said Dowell, who led Ross with 21 points.

Dowell's heroics, which nullified the 25-point, eight-rebound effort of the Arrows' Stephanie Weber, vaulted Ross (15-6) into Saturday's sectional final against No. 1 Mansfield Madison (14-6) at

Willard High School (6:30 p.m., WFRO).

"We've got our work cut out for us Saturday," coach Sue Wolf said. "They're a pretty darn good team so we better be ready to go."

Turns out last Thursday's thrilling victory at Oregon Clay was equal parts a loss as it was a win for the Little Giants. Although Amy Smith, Ross's leading regular-season scorer, played the entire game to help Ross clinch a tie for the Great Lakes League title, she hit the operating room Tuesday.

That left Wolf to fill a second starting void, along with the one already created eight games ago



DOWELL

by Jami Toepppe's knee injury.

"I don't think that's any reason why we can't continue," said Tonya Elder, who made her first start of the season against

Ashland. "We've stepped it up all year and I think we can continue doing that."

They did. But it took a while. A long while.

In a cavernously quiet Willard gym, Ashland (5-16) opened a 28-19 halftime lead by outscoring

Ross 12-5 in the second quarter. Weber, who had 14 first-half points, scored six straight points to give her team a 24-16 lead.

Senior Michelle Marquette, who finished with 12 points and 10 rebounds, had six of her seven assists in the first half.

"We could have helped ourselves a lot," Wolf said. "We needed to make the adjustment of not playing with Amy out there, and it took us a long time to do it."

For the first 4:32 of the second half, Dowell was unstoppable, scoring five straight points and dishing to a cutting Marcy Rein-

Ross responds to Wolf's halftime talk

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bolt at the post to reduce Ashland's lead to 28-26.

After the Arrows called timeout, Dowell hit a pair of free throws to tie the game at 28.

Obviously, Wolf's halftime pep talk sank in.

"I told her, 'Pick up your game because we need you,'" Wolf said. "She wasn't even catching the ball in the first half; it was going through her hands. I told her, 'You can play better than you're playing,' and she did."

Ashland had a 32-30 lead going into the fourth quarter, but could not hold onto it, as Michele Smith, who had 13 points and 11 rebounds, created a 39-39 knot with a 3-point play with 3:18 remaining in regulation. Smith converted a nifty feed from Dowell with 1:45 left to give Ross a 43-39 lead, but Weber posted up to make it 43-41.

Seventeen seconds after Ross called a timeout, Weber drilled an NBA-range 3-pointer to put Ashland up by 1 point, but Dowell hit a hanging jumper on Ross's next possession.

Ashland had a chance to win it with six seconds left, as Marquette went to the line for a pair of free throws after Weber missed consecutive attempts. Marquette missed the first but claimed the second and Dowell fell short on a baseline jumper to send the

teams into overtime tied at 45.

With 20 seconds left in the extra session, Weber hit a layup to put Ashland up, 50-49. But with four seconds left, Nicole Marquette fouled Dowell, who was driving through the lane, to give Dowell her fifth and sixth charity shots.

She made no mistake.

"I've been in this situation before and I knew I could do it," Dowell said.

"Give her credit," said Ashland coach Dan McFadden. "Those are two big free throws. When you've got to make a 1-and-1 instead of a two-shot foul, that's a lot more pressure on the first shot and she nailed them both."

It's called survival.

LITTLE GIANTS NOTES: Credit an assist to the Ross boys basketball team for this victory, as they have practiced with Wolf's troops the last few days. "They helped us a lot on rebounding, boxing out and fast break stuff," Dowell said. "They're a lot quicker than we were and they helped us a lot defensively." ... Amy Smith's left index finger was broken at the knuckle, and the junior forward did not accompany the Little Giants to Willard. "She's done," said Wolf. ... Maybe Smith's position is jinxed. Elder, who started in her place, jammed a couple of her fingers on her left hand, but returned with them taped together.

GIRLS BASKETBALL SECTIONALS

Rams rule Ross again

Ross's foul trouble keys Madison rally

By MICHAEL BOSI
Staff writer

WILLARD — Lacking any player with superhuman qualities possessed by, oh, the Dawn Zermans of the world, the Fremont Ross girls team, which knew that it takes an army and not a single soldier to win a war, preached a team concept until their purple faces turned blue this season.

It was imperative for the Little Giants to have all five players on the floor — if not more — contributing to the offense and defense. And more often than not, 15 times to be exact, they found enough players to do the job, and the assault-by-committee translated into a "V" for victory.

But with its season on the line, Ross simply ran out of players.

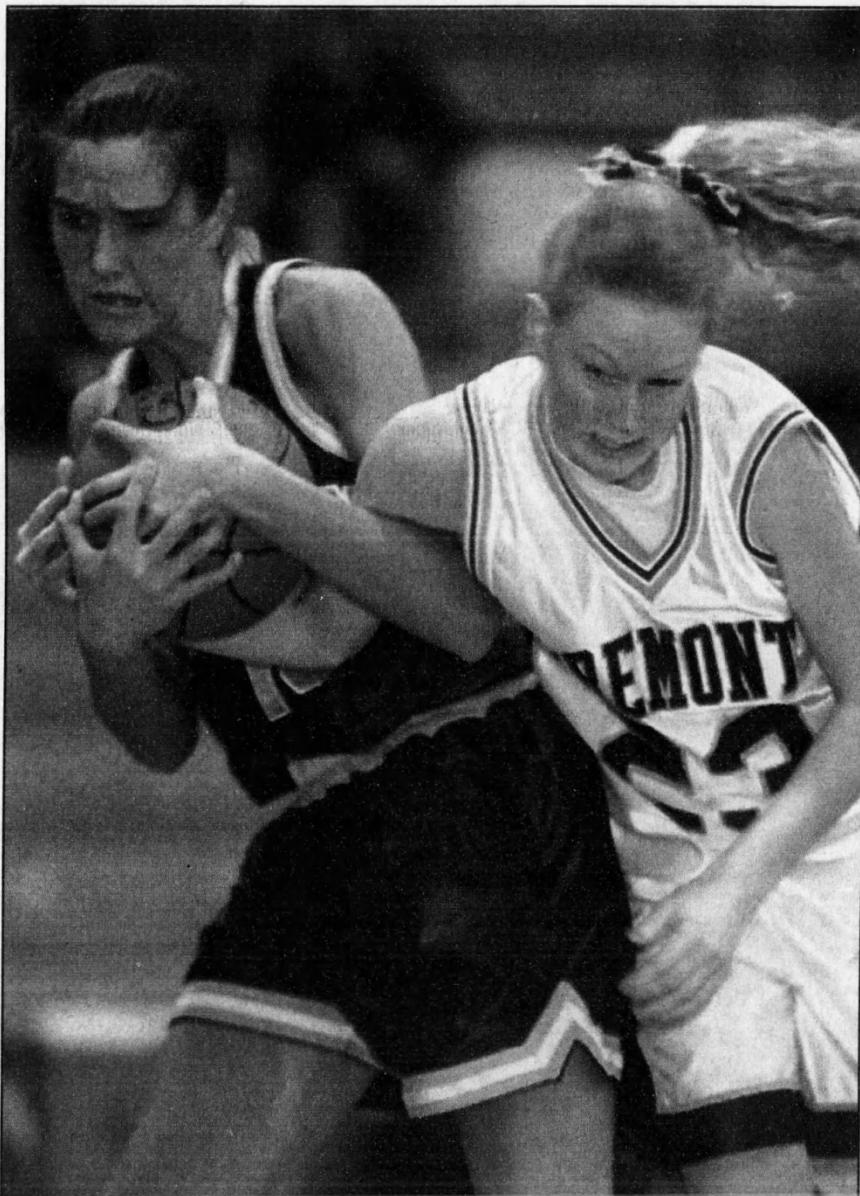
And then it ran out of time. This war is over.

The Little Giants led for all but 3:37 of their Northwest Division I sectional final against top-seeded Mansfield Madison Saturday night, but those 217 seconds were all the Rams needed, along with the foul trouble that burdened Ross like an ironclad cannon, to advance to the district tournament a 40-35 winner.

While Madison gets to take on Wapakoneta next week, Ross ends its season 15-7 and pondering the invincibility of this Ohio Heartland Conference school, which also ended Ross's volleyball team's season last fall.

"We gave everything," said Ross's Jodi Fick. "Foul trouble at the end hurt us a lot. When

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News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

FREMONT ROSS'S Emily Dowell battles Madison's Jocelyn Pelasky for the ball in the third quarter of the Rams' 40-35 Division I sectional victory Saturday at Willard High School.